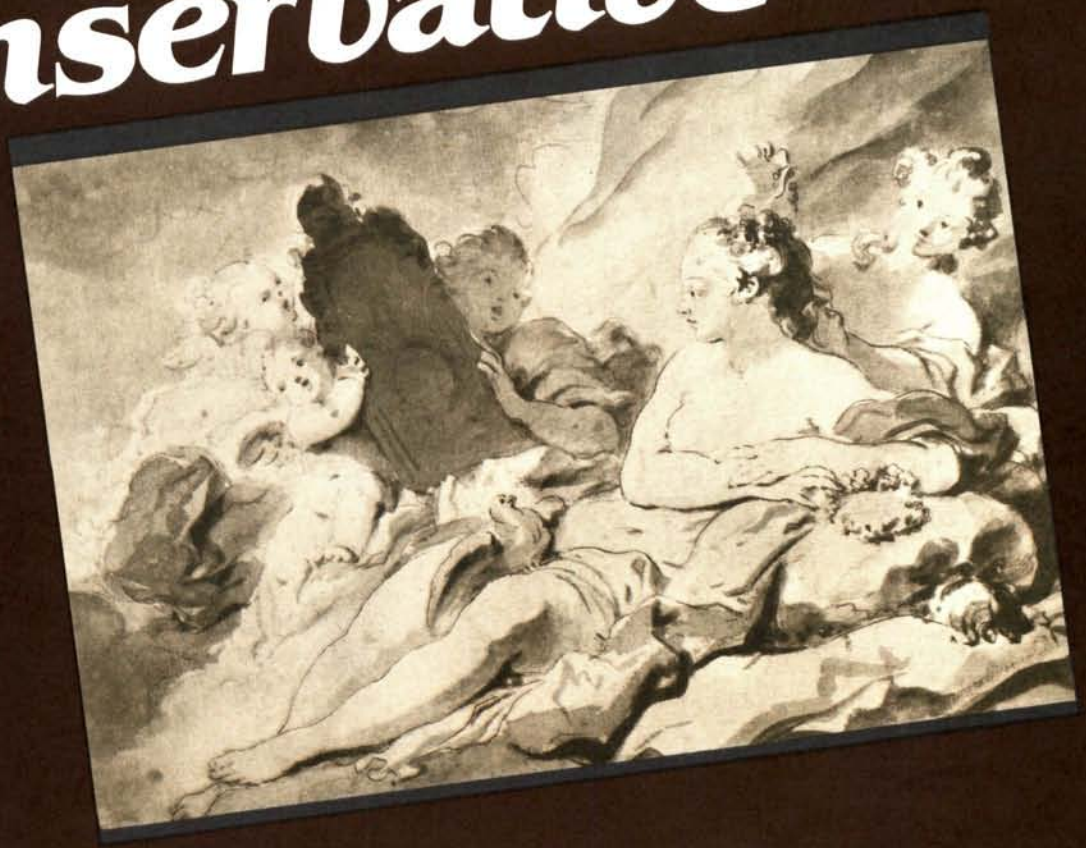
The Conservative Id



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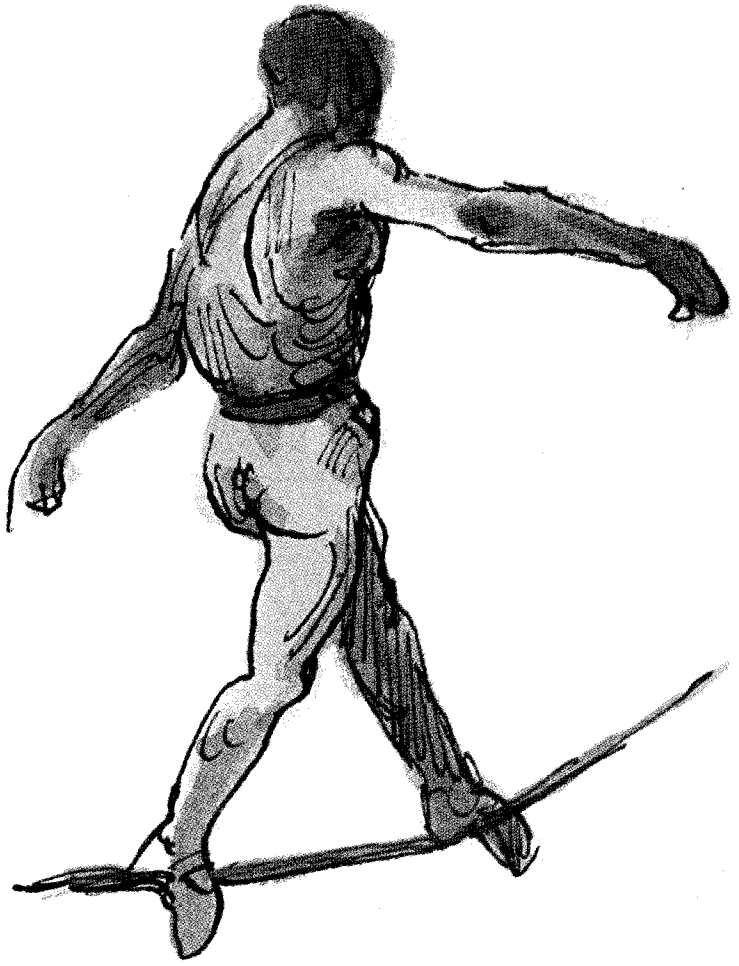

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COMMENT

Psychoanalysis, indeed, the entire field of psychology, which is today considered as a science, has come to be regarded by many as an agent of moral disorder responsible for a multitude of behavioral and social ills that plague our society. And in that, it is also seen as an integral part of the modern liberal world view. We feel that this perception merits reevaluation.

This Comment is the text of a letter to the editor that we considered interesting enough to print, with the permission of the author, as an open letter.

—The Editor

Dear Mr. Tyrmand:

I first want to say that I am an enthusiastic, although recent, subscriber to *Chronicles of Culture*. I read with enjoyment and approval your "Editor's Comment" of September 1982. However, it contained one clause that made me wince. It is not the first time I have had to wince for the same reason while reading conservative journals. The clause of concern was embedded in a sentence regarding the liberal notion of the "pinnacle of humanness" as being achieved, among other places, "on the psychoanalytical couch." I am a practicing psychoanalyst and think that I am reasonably entitled to speak with some authority on this particular subject. This time, I decided to challenge an unjust stereotype.

I'm afraid that on this issue, most of the new left and the current "liberal" community have done their homework better than you have done yours, and *they do not like psychoanalysis*. It is safe to say that the further left an individual's political views the more hostile he is towards psychoanalysis. There is good and sufficient reason for this state of affairs. The conflict between leftist political thought and psychoanalytic thought goes back to the beginning of the communist state. Quite early in its existence the Soviet Union clasped psychoanalysis to its collective bosom. Shortly thereafter it was abruptly thrown out, to the accompaniment of the Marxist version of bell, book, and candle. This occurred because the antithetical nature of psychoanalysis and the Soviet version of collectivism was quickly grasped by the party leadership. This alone should alert conservatives to rethink some issues.

The reason that psychoanalysis was correctly seen by communist theoreticians as antithetical to their vision of the world lies in the very nature of man itself. The Marxist view of man is psychologically far different from that of the followers of Sigmund Freud. That difference is fundamental and permits no meeting of the minds, no possibility of compromise, no coexistence whatsoever. The Marxist version of man, reduced to its barest essentials, is that the child comes into the world with the mind as tabula rasa; he is then trained to become what he becomes by purely environmental forces. The criminal, then, is, of course, the creation of a cruel and unjust or warped society and is more a victim than a malcontent. Once the effects of private property and other such "evil" institutions have been eliminated, harmony between man and man, and man and society, will prevail. I can do no better than to quote one Soviet theoretician as he described the communist man:

> The Communist man is no egotist, no individualist; he will be characterized by a conscious collective spirit and by concern for the commonweal. The firm basis of this morality is his loyalty to the collective, his readiness and his ability conscientiously to defend the interests of society.

Communists believe that the nature of man is completely malleable, that his plasticity is virtually unlimited: he is a Pavlovian creature. Such a view is absolutely necessary to any utopian political vision.

The psychoanalytic explanation of man's nature is otherwise. The child is seen as entering the world with a core of instinctual drives which cannot be altogether changed; gratification can be delayed, displaced, or disguised but the essential nature of the *id* remains intact from birth to death. These drives are expressed in rage, lust, greed, love, and so on. They are also capable of being channeled into nobler sentiments like tenderness, compassion, and idealism, or sublimated into great works of art and literature. The Freudian man is always in a struggle to expand his conscious ego and to come to terms with his instinctual urges. Because of constitutional (genetic) factors, the powerful drives that are part of man's biological heritage cannot always be rechanneled sufficiently to achieve even a modicum of social cooperation, and so there will always be a certain number of criminals, murderers, and misfits. The average man, however, tries to achieve *his own ends* without being unduly aggressive against his neighbors or his conscience. Psychoanalytic man is, above all, individualistic.

Such a picture of man is congruent with the ideas of the framers of the Constitution, who, by including elaborate checks and balances against the accumulation of power, made clear that they saw man as self-serving and likely to abuse power should he get the opportunity. The age-old religious theme that man is always in a struggle between the good and evil inside himself is equally congruent with the Freudian view of man. History, of course, presents an endless parade of lust, murder, greed, and nobility that no amount of leftist revisionist history can simplistically explain in terms of institutions and class struggle.

I have, I hope, made it clear that Sigmund Freud and Adam Smith had basically similar expectations of man's nature, however, they might have differed about the ultimate source of that nature. The psychoanalytic view *is* a conservative view, making it all the more interesting to examine the displeasure with which many conservatives approach psychoana-

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lytic ideas.

It seems clear that much of the scorn and contumely routinely heaped upon psychoanalysis in contemporary conservative political thought is due to: (1) the left-oriented political statements made by psychoanalytic figures who fail to understand the political implications of psychoanalysis (which are anything but collective); (2) the unfortunate tendency of many people, both psychological laymen and those who should know better, to use the term psychoanalyst indiscriminately; and (3) the failure of those psychoanalysts and others who know the implications of psychoanalytic theory to do more than feel smugly superior, if somewhat annoyed, at the distortions which are routinely made of psychoanalytic ideas. Bear with me while I expand on the first of these points, and I believe you will understand why "the movement" fears and dislikes psychoanalysis and why conservatives should respect it.

Without going into a technical discussion of the stages of psychoanalytic treatment as experienced by an individual who undergoes it, I will proceed directly to the heart of the process. The *reality principle* is the core of psychoanalytic treatment. At small risk of oversimplification, it can be said that this principle provides the major focus of initial evaluation, as well as the major criterion for the success of the analytic process. By this I mean that the ability of a candidate for psychoanalysis to distinguish between reality and illusion, as well as his subsequent reaction to both, is loosely termed his "mental health." Hence, diagnosis is essentially an evaluation of how well one perceives reality. It follows then that the treatment, to the degree that it is effective, results in an expanded awareness of reality; what was previously misunderstood is seen for what it is, whether pleasant or unpleasant, flattering or painful. Neurotic illusions are replaced by reality.

What results from such a process is not only a person who is aware of his history and its effects upon him, but also a person who understands the consequences of his own and others' behavior, one who takes responsibility for his own actions, and expects other people to take responsibility for their behavior *and its consequences*. Obviously, liberals and social apologists of every political shade are not going to like the sort of thinking or any discipline that encourages this kind of realism. They prefer utopian ideas wherein there are no real consequences for action.

The individual on the couch, far from experiencing his situation as the "pinnacle" of anything, finds himself involved in a long, wearying journey in which "blood, sweat, toil, and tears" are his daily fare. His reward is that he has to swallow some very unpleasant truths about human nature, most of all his own. If the process is successful, he may also find, in Freud's words, "the freedom to work and to love." This, and only this, is what psychoanalysis is about—the liberation of the individual from illusion.

It is therefore with great regret that I must accuse many of my psychoanalytic colleagues of succumbing to the same corruption that has so shamefully infected faculties of the colleges and universities, that "vice of the intellectuals": uncritical Marxist ideology. It is only the talent and will for systematic, critical thought that can possibly distinguish intellectuals from anybody else—or make intellectuals worthwhile—and they have lost it. This, however, is not the fault of psychoanalysis any more than Marcuse is the fault of philosophy.

On the misidentification of who and what is psychoanalytic, I believe that anyone who is at all familiar with contemporary American culture is aware that it is common to hear any sort of psychotherapist, of any theoretical persuasion whatsoever, called "my analyst" or "my shrink" (which, for interesting psychoanalytic reasons, signifies the same thing). The appellation is even applied to, of all things, various and sundry behaviorists and "rational" types of therapists. This leads to the sad fact that what any psychologist or psychiatrist may state about human nature, and the politics thereof, is likely to be attributed to psychoanalysis, which is the source of the term *analyst*. It follows, then, that the warped, politicized views of mental health espoused by R.D. Laing and his ilk become attributed by unsophisticated conservatives to psychoanalysis. And upon our heads are heaped the reactions to the so-called Existential *Analysts*—that word again.

On the other hand, when the left celebrates psychotherapy they are all quite aware that they are not praising psychoanalysis but specifically espousing the views of behaviorists and other utopians who believe human nature can be whatever a do-gooder wishes it to be, whatever a dreamer wishes to make it into. Psychoanalysis, with its Adam Smith-like notions of human selfishness and greed (not to mention rage and passion), is clearly not their cup of tea.

My final point is confessional. For more years than I choose to number, I have sat back and silently scorned the naive and the ignorant for their misuse of psychoanalytic ideas and the misidentification of psychoanalytic figures. Recently it has become evident to me that many like-minded colleagues have done the same, some even assuming that they stood alone in their disagreement with and disapproval of such wholesale distortion of psychoanalysis. Belatedly, I am aware that silent scorn is only a refuge from responsibility. This letter is the fruit of a conviction, however newfound, that the world will belong to the activists and, therefore, if I have real convictions about the kind of world I want to live in, I must *be* an activist. And so I become one.

—Richard Peters, Ed.D.

Dr. Peters teaches at the Institute for Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy in Philadelphia and is coauthor of The Visible and Invisible Group.

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Phillips's Complaint

Kevin P. Phillips, *Post-Conservative America: People, Politics and Ideology in a Time of Crisis;* Random House; New York.

by Charles A. Moser

Post-Conservative America is Kevin Phillips's fourth book. Essentially, it merely recapitulates and develops certain ideas from the book which first brought him public notoriety in 1969: *The Emerging Republican Majority*. The most important idea he advanced there was that of the coming dominance of the "Sun Belt" in American politics, the result of population shifts south and west. The potential Republican majority of which Phillips wrote some 15 years ago has, in fact, emerged no more than partially, even in 1980; the 1982 elections have demonstrated how unstable it is. So in his latest book Phillips sets out to explain away some of his previous predictions, and, in addition, to argue that the Reagan coalition of 1980 cannot remain a long-term force in American politics. In short, the Phillips of today dislikes the partial Republican majority formed at the national level.

Although *Post-Conservative America* contains some valuable observations—like those Phillips has been making for years—it suffers from a pervasive intellectual confusion, unnecessary repetition, and a prevalent pessimism that overcomes occasional onslaughts of cheerfulness. The shadow of a rightist "Man on a White Horse" darkens its pages: though Phillips constantly reassures himself that Americans would never accept a dictator, he probably lies awake worrying about it some nights. Much of this book is "futuristic" in the worst journalistic sense, for it is much easier to speculate about the future—utilizing the feeble historical parallels of which Phillips is so fond—than it is to comprehend thoroughly the history of even the recent past.

An important strand of Phillips's argument is a critique of what he calls "revolutionary" or "radical" conservatism, a "center extremism" to which he thinks Ronald Reagan adheres. As he puts it:

> the Reagan Administration's firmly pronounced goals . . . represent a revolutionary blueprint more akin to other attempts at national restoration than to conservatism's usual efforts to maintain threatened existing institutions and relationships. Toynbee, one must note, suggests that such efforts invariably disrupt, fail or degenerate into Caesarism.

Like the garden-variety liberal ideologue, Phillips evidently now believes that the true conservative's task is to buttress that which liberalism has already achieved while it goes on to new conquests, not to move in an entirely different direction. Phillips attacks the doctrines of supply-side economics as "radical," and advances a generally negative view of the Reagan Administration's economic policies. In his typically irresolute way Phillips suggests that when candidate Reagan in 1980 urged a return to the "values of family, neighborhood and work" he touched sentiments very like those on which Hitler played during his rise to power. Phillips exaggerates the importance of rightist movements on American campuses (the genuine threat to civility and freedom of speech in the university stems from the radical left, which strongly influences the center), and consistently criticizes the new right and its objectives.

Indeed, to the extent that a coherent argument can be extracted from Phillips's pages, it generally resembles that of the radical left. In his introduction Phillips speaks of his "vaguely neo-Marxian brand of conservative analysis" (the phrase beautifully illustrates his intellectual confusion), and throughout he approvingly cites—along with conservative writers—several New Left or revisionist commentators, including William Appleman Williams, Lester Thurow, Carl Oglesby, and Marcus Raskin, as well as Alan Crawford, author of an intellectually disreputable book about the new right. These are certainly not writers who would have provided any sustenance to the Phillips of 15 years ago.

Phillips's "neo-Marxian" approach appears to derive from a Spenglerian pessimism, a conviction that the United States has entered upon an irreversible decline, that "history" invariably decrees that the central state should gradually extend its authority throughout society. As a consequence, he renews his attack on the constitutionally established "separation of powers" in order to advocate a quasi-parliamentary system under which, among other things, members of the Congress would simultaneously serve in the President's cabinet. But the core of his conviction is that the central state—by which he means primarily the executive branch—must become even more powerful than it is now. Thus at one point he clearly states:

> The argument . . . which I, for one, find difficult to fault . . . is that governmental power is too diffused to make difficult and necessary economic and technical decisions; accordingly, the nature of that power must be re-thought. Power at the federal

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level must be augmented, and lodged for the most part in the executive branch.

As a crude but useful generalization, we may say that political battles in any modern system are fought over the proper degree of political control over a society, including its economy. The new right—and to a lesser extent the Reagan Administration—believes that government has already extended its powers much too far, and that the reach of governmental authority must be reduced: we must work for change in the direction of freeing society from its political shackles. The left, on the other hand, advocates socialism, the idea that society in its entirety should be subject to political controls. Basically, the question is straightforward: how much government is enough for a good society? President Reagan's answer, that of the new right and of the majority of the American people (even Jimmy Carter sounded anti-Washington themes in his 1976 campaign), is that we have too much government, that its dominance over our lives must be reduced. The answer of the Marcus Raskins and Kevin Phillipses, on the other hand, is that government enjoys far too little power, and that it must be further extended. A clear understanding of this dichotomy makes it plain how far the new right is from advocating the ascendancy of a Hitler, who, after all, called himself a National *Socialist*.

In fact, the political malaise of our day derives from a disguised leftist dictatorship of the very sort Phillips promotes: the dictatorship of the permanent Washington bureaucracy—in the legislative branch, the executive branch, and especially the judiciary. The permanent bureaucracy—which, in large part, is not subject to political control because of the Civil Service system—attends to the day-to-day operations of the government: Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries are most often mere epiphenomena on the stage of history. If the permanent bureaucracy captures control of those in top positions, it can pursue its established statist policies with only slight modifications even under a Reagan Administration. If it cannot co-opt its superiors, it conducts clandestine warfare against them (claiming that they are "unqualified," or even "motivated by political considerations," as well they should be), and it often emerges victorious. A major, widely supported plank of the Reagan program was the abolition of the Departments of Education and of Energy. But the permanent bureaucracy has done its work, and two years later the Reagan Administration has proposed no serious legislation at all to accomplish this pruning of government. And if such legislation is offered, it will have scant chance of passage.

The Federal budget provides a crude but useful measure of the extent of government intervention in our society: the surging increases in the budget over the last decade map the growth of that intervention. The most the Reagan Administration has been able to do—and that by dint of great exertion—is not to reduce the budget, but merely to slow its rate of growth slightly. The prevailing pressures in Washington almost all favor increased Federal spending: consider the relative ease with which the Dole tax increase passed Congress in light of the difficulty of obtaining domestic spending reductions and the unremitting attacks on the tax-rate reductions which are the centerpiece of the Reagan economic program. When tax questions on which it can make informed judgments come directly before the electorate in a referendum, the voters usually make it clear that the reach of government spending is quite sufficient, although the established political leadership of both parties usually sees things quite otherwise. So far it has proven impossible to impose meaningful limitations on government spending through our representative government, primarily because of the power of the permanent and irresponsible bureaucracy.

The type of power which Phillips hopes to see lodged in the executive branch has in fact already been exercised for some years by the Federal judiciary, which fears no retaliation at the polls. It is precisely the exercise of raw governmental power by the judiciary—in the areas of busing, school prayer, abortion, free speech—which has engendered sullen resentment and distrust of government throughout the country.

The fact that government presently seems unable to move in any very coherent direction is simply a political reflection of the breakdown of the national cultural consensus, a breakdown caused in great part by the exercise of political power. For example, 25 years ago there existed an almost universal consensus in favor of school prayer. That consensus has now broken down—mostly because of the irresponsible Supreme Court ruling of 1962—and so the issue is now highly controversial. As court decisions and other actions of the Federal government contribute to the destruction of consensus in many areas, the electoral system yields schizophrenic results. In fact, if the political system functions properly, it *should* mirror our cultural disagreements. It may be fatal to seek a solution through the imposition of brute state power, as Phillips would have us do; rather we should work to restore wholeness within the culture. A nation divided against itself cannot stand, especially when it faces the ruthless hostility of communist totalitarianism. But that is another question, one which Phillips, along with most Americans, much prefers to ignore. Phillips thus concludes:

> My sense is that the chances for a traditional realignment of the party system are slim. Instead, what we'll probably see are short-term political coalitions and supremacies based more on communications technology than on old-style parties. In the process, our politics will become increasingly prone to plebiscitary techniques and appeals. The American party system seems a long way from overcoming two decades of weakness. In fact, that weakness is probably moving front and center.

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It is no doubt true that the 1980's will be a decade of political uncertainty characterized by rapid shifts in power, similar to the decade following the end of World War II. The direction finally taken will be determined by organizational skill on the political level and by cogency of argumentation on the intellectual and cultural level. It must wait upon the restoration of consensus even on such matters as national defense. In the meantime, if government is unable to extend its authority in the domestic sphere, that will be all to the good. □

On Thrills & Correctitude

Leslie Fiedler: *What Was Literature?: Class Culture and Mass Society;* Simon & Schuster; New York.

Paul Fussell: *The Boy Scout Handbook and Other Observations;* Oxford University Press; New York.

by Gary S. Vasilash

If there's a K-Mart in Buffalo, New York, then customers there have undoubtedly spotted a burly man in his late fifties in the so-called "Book-Korner" whose eyes glow with the luminosity of two cigar butts as he gazes upon the racks of Janet Dailey, John Jakes, Rosemary Rogers, Isaac Asimov, and the rest. He is no ordinary bargain hunter, though I suspect that even a man who is described as having taught "in many of the great universities of the Western World" on the dust jackets of his collected essays (there are two volumes) needs to get a good deal on housewares and motor oil, to say nothing of saving 10% on book prices. He is Samuel Clemens Professor of English at the State University of New York at Buffalo, Leslie Fiedler. He was once widely known as Leslie A. Fiedler; he probably didn't hit K-Mart then. He claims in *What Was Literature?: Class Culture and Mass Society* that his use of the middle initial was rather pretentious: during the L.A.F. period he most likely confined his book-browsing to sites fully stocked with Pelicans and Penguins. But now he is a changed man, though no less cantankerous and ornery. And while K-Mart doesn't make it into his latest exhortation, it's worth noting that *Kojack, Baretta,* and *Starsky and Hutch* do. James, Milton, and even contemporaries like John Barth are there too, but if Fiedler is correct, then their fates are less agreeable than those of the canceled television shows.

Mr. Vasilash is associate editor of the Chronicles.

The title of Fiedler's book *What Was Literature?* connotes, because of the tense, that it is another tract written to inter the novel. It isn't. The book—at least in light of his new purity—should carry a more accurate title, such as *What Was Literature Before I Decided What Counts?* or, more simply, *There's a Harlequin in Your Future.*

"It is perhaps to be expected that the Negro and the homosexual should become stock literary themes in a period when the exploration of responsibility and failure has become again a primary concern of our literature." So opens "Come Back to the Raft Ag'in, Huck Honey," an essay that first appeared in *Partisan Review,* June 1948: Fiedler established himself on the scene, kicking. He notes in *What Was Literature?* that one result of World War II was a large cadre of young upstarts, many of whom had government-subsidized Ph.D.'s, many of which were awarded by land-grant and city colleges. These barbarians (in the root sense) were "Sons and daughters of working-class or petty-bourgeois parents, not even predominantly North European, much less *echt* Anglo-Saxon, after a while overwhelmingly East European Jewish." People, that is, like Fiedler. They battered at the doors, climbed over the walls, and undermined the "Citadel" being held by old-line scholars: "elitists," Fiedler calls them. The new breed was successful; its members established themselves in the universities. But they became what they opposed: Milton and Shelley were out; Pound and Eliot were just as tenaciously touted. And so, basically, things have remained (with the exception of the emergence of structuralists, deconstructionists, etc.). Still, Fiedler remains, kicking, undoubtedly to be one day led away in that state by white-jacketed professionals. Fiedler notes with certain pride that he has "graduated, in the view of [his] critics, from the status of *enfant terrible* to that of 'dirty old man' without passing through a decent maturity." He is, rather, an embittered Peter Pan who has delusions of being the Napoleon of literature.

The problem that exists is defining the "our literature" that Fiedler speaks of in the sentence quoted above from "Come Back to the Raft." He points out, for example, that Mark Twain, who has served as his meal ticket since his arrival (mark the chair he holds at SUNY-Buffalo), was once considered too low for serious consideration by scholars and critics. He resents the fact that the former members of the revolutionary cadre have settled into their tenured positions, leaving him to be an avant-garde of one. One way that Fiedler has continued his agitation is through self-exposure, which is as shocking to his now-staid peers as a man in a trench coat, shoes, and nothing else is to an unwitting passerby in a park. Although most would describe Fiedler as a teacher and a critic, that isn't what Fiedler '82 considers himself. He says, "It has taken me decades . . . to realize that like other entertainers I have been paid to allay boredom—in my case by making our country and our culture seem more interesting and amusing than most academic accounts would lead us to believe." That Fiedler has talked about James Fenimore Cooper on *The Merv Griffin Show* should come as no shock to

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anyone in this TV age. Actually, Fiedler should be hailed, not reviled, for bringing Natty Bumppo to those tuning in to hear about Zsa Zsa Gabor's diamonds and husbands. Fiedler answers detractors who accuse him of "selling out" by correctly saying, "By the last decades of the twentieth century . . . those critics, once able to think of themselves as the all-powerful legislators of the invisible Republic of Letters, have themselves been co-opted by the university, as completely as the hucksters they despise have been by the marketplace." The unsettling thing is that Fiedler, a learned man, thinks it necessary to oppose "academic accounts" by knocking down any restraints that stand in the way of, as he titles the second half of his book, "Opening Up the Canon." Just as the flasher in the park gets a quick and easy thrill, Fiedler thinks that the reader of "our literature" should get one, too. *Thrill* is an operative term in Fiedler's definition of "our literature." Middle initial or no, Fiedler is still a Doctor of Philosophy, so he trots out an authority to lend him a hand:

> And what is incumbent on us now, it seems to me as I reach the end of definition and move on to advocacy, is to take a cue from Longinus and create an approach to literature in which we will, if not quite abandon, at least drastically downgrade both ethics and aesthetics in favor of 'ecstatics.'

To Fiedler's mind the problem in the universities (the source of standards of literature) today is that his former colleagues, those who deal with Pound and Eliot—or Pynchon, Barth, and other postmodernists, for that matter—are, in "with-it" lingo, "hung up" on things like instruction and delight; they are still following the uncool Horace.

It's not that Fiedler has anything against ethics and aesthetics; they have their place in his revised curriculum, albeit a small, out-of-the-way locale. But works to which those standards are applied and which meet the requirements tend to be *boring:* no one outside of a university, he thinks, would want to read them. Which ultimately leads to book-browsing at K-Mart. According to Fiedler, "It is indeed an essential function of literature to release in us unnatural impulses—including the need from time to time to go out of our heads—which we otherwise repress or sublimate for the sake of law and order, civilization, sweet reason itself." This is rather more than Aristotle's *katharsis;* indeed, Fiedler says what readers are *really* looking for in "mythic art" is "privileged insanity." Thus the before-mentioned white-jacketed professionals. Few reading, say, *The Portrait of a Lady* would feel inclined to go out of their heads. *Wonder Woman* comics, Fiedler thinks, supplies that urge for some. That means they are good.

Fiedler correctly points out that much "classic" American literature was, in its day, "popular" literature. Critics and scholars entrenched in the universities—his old pals—deal with popular culture in a condescending manner: those neoelitists would never complain in a book about their "favorite cop shows, including *Baretta, Kojack* and *Starsky and Hutch,*" being driven from the air by those who don't understand the shows' "ecstatic" function. Fiedler contends that Conan Doyle, Bram Stoker, Edgar Rice Burroughs, and similar authors who have created characters that have a "mythic" quality should be considered top-drawer material, not second-rate. Eventually this leads to the approach that can be formulated thus: If it's popular, it's undoubtedly mythic; if it's mythic, it's got to be good; if it's good, it's got to be literature. Fiedler spends nearly half of *What Was Literature?* arguing that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* should be considered one of the classics of American literature because of its undying popularity, the root of which he discovers in its mythic quality. (Fiedler

LIBERAL CULTURE

Dementia in an Advanced Stage

Under a particularly idiotic title—"Is Sex Dead?"—*New York* magazine, the agitprop sheet for mass-produced herd instincts (which its editors call trends), ponders the contemporary amorphousness of mores. Asking whether sex is dead amounts to asking whether there's still life on this planet, or if the supply of oxygen necessary for breathing is still around; nonetheless, blithely unaware of her own blockheadedness, the "observer" of modern sexualia on behalf of *New York* opines on the "sexual revolution":

> Like all revolutions, this one leaves a long casualty list. But the list of its accomplishments is lengthy as well. . . . Premature ejaculators and nonorgasmic women poured by the thousands into sex clinics and therapy workshops, where the definition of normality was changed dozens of times, until it faded altogether. The borders that defined sex roles blurred.

So now, we do not know any longer what's normal and what is not. And *New York* sees that as very, very good indeed. As the wise old Greeks used to say: those whom the gods would destroy, they first take their brains away. □

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isn't a disinterested critic in this case: it helps lend weight to his thesis in "Come Back to the Raft Ag'in, Huck Honey," which basically says that white people feel a homosexual longing for black people, which is why *The Leatherstocking Tales, Moby Dick,* and *Huckleberry Finn* are really admired.) He doesn't say that the "accepted" classics that happen to be boring should be canceled from the syllabi due to poor Nielsen ratings, but with his trivial treatment of them, he damns them to dusty library shelves.

One writer who doesn't appear in the pages of *What Was Literature?* is George Orwell, the man who, in 1945, took a term from Chesterton and used it as the springboard for an essay: "Good Bad Books." Orwell doesn't define that type of book as one that causes its readers to go berserk; instead, he writes that it is "the kind of book that has no literary pretensions but which remains readable when more serious productions have perished." Orwell points out that such books are simply more enjoyable, oftentimes, than what is conventionally considered literature, and that "They bring out the fact that intellectual refinement can be a disadvantage to a story-teller, as it would be to a music-hall comedian." The most telling passage, vis-à-vis *What Was Literature?,* one that causes all of Fiedler's postures to look like nothing more than music-hall histrionics, is the following: "Perhaps the supreme example of the 'good bad' book is *Uncle Tom's Cabin.* It is an unintentionally ludicrous book, full of preposterous melodramatic incidents; it is also deeply moving and essentially true; it is hard to say which quality outweighs the other." Orwell is being coy: obviously the former outweighs the latter.

Literature, in its accepted sense, is something that not only moves the emotions, but which causes one to think. Wordsworth, certainly a partisan of enthusiasm in literature, wrote in his *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* (1802): "the poet is chiefly distinguished from other men by a greater promptness to think and feel without immediate external excitement, and a greater power in expressing such thoughts and feelings as are produced in him in that manner. . . . The poet thinks and feels in the spirit of the passions of men," and, of course,

> I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility: the emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquility gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced and does itself actually exist in the mind.

It is clear that cerebration plays a vital role in romantic poetry, just as it does in prose literature. While I happen to enjoy the stories of Conan Doyle and the science fiction of Philip Jose Farmer—something that I share with Fiedler—I also recognize that my enjoyment stems simply from a purely emotional involvement: I find the stories and novels exciting. My intellect comes into play only inasmuch as I try to outthink Holmes or try to see a way of escape from a doomed planet before the solution is provided. Should I care not to think ahead to the end, then it really doesn't matter, as the authors will carry me there. Henry James may not offer as exciting a "read," but by being forced to reflect on his consciousness (i.e., there is no free ride), I can come away intellectually stimulated so that I am better able to perceive and react —even emotionally—to nuances that might otherwise escape me, particularly if I confined myself to the less-subtle forms of prose and states of "privileged insanity."

Paul Fussell is a bit of an Orwell, someone, that is, who examines books both high and low and who also turns a discerning eye toward other cultural concerns. This stance may be deliberate, as Orwell's name appears with a certain inevitability in *The Boy Scout Handbook and Other Observations.* The collection is composed of pieces Fussell wrote for various publications, such as *The New Republic* (of which he is a contributing editor), *New York Times Book Review,* and *Encounter.* The essays were "reconsidered and rewritten" for this text. The topics range from, not surprisingly, world war to travel, subjects he detailed most lucidly in, respectively, *The Great War and Modern Memory* and *Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars.* Fussell is an intelligent writer with a sense of humor. For example, he undermines Nabokov's *Notes on Prosody* with pithy comments including this: "Thus what a mere graduate student, in the simplicity of his heart, would call a pyrrhic foot Nabokov calls a 'scudded foot,' or a 'scud.'" He effectively uses a veiled reference to Pope to admonish writers who frantically answer negative reviews by noting about a fictional wounded soul, "He is too impatient to revise, and he certainly feels no impulse to keep his piece for nine years."

Ezra Pound often emerges, too. "Make it new," Pound recommends in another context, yet that's basically what Fussell attempts to do in his observations about aspects of the past: breathe some life into them, let them be seen as they were when they were new. Resuscitation typically dominates over revisionism. There is a hint that Fussell would like to be more prickly like Pound—more like Fiedler, say—but his manners get in the way. This is not to say that he is obsequiously polite, however. Halfway through his piece on *Literary Landscapes of the British Isles* by David Daiches and John Flower, two men respected in their fields, Fussell provides a minicatechism: "Readable? It's not even publishable." He further vents his indignation by having a fictitious user of the field guide to bookish hot spots "hurl the book" (note the verb) out of a car window so that it "falls with a satisfying splash . . . in the River Brent" (note the adjective).

Fussell's manners undoubtedly stem from General Robert Baden-Powell, whose spirit strays far beyond the title essay. Baden-Powell, of course, founded

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the Boy Scouts in 1910. (It's remarkable that Fussell doesn't note that Baden-Powell, with his sister Agnes, also founded the Girl Guides.) A Scout—as all who were lucky enough to be one remember and as most who weren't somehow seem to know—is, among other things, courteous, kind, and cheerful, paradigms of behavior that Fussell aims to achieve. However, there is another specter haunting the book, one who is never named. It's Herbert Croly, the man who founded *The New Republic* in 1914. Because of that ghost, Fussell's before-mentioned discerning eye glazes over. For example, Fussell writes: "In the [he specifies a time period], while American boys were preparing to bomb women and children, their moral purity was still under the guardianship of the Postmaster General." The combination of "moral purity" and "Postmaster General" brings to mind people like Anthony Comstock and John S. Sumner, men who made the mails difficult in Croly's day. But Fussell is talking about the "early 1940's." His specific subject is "the astonishing chastity of the full-page pinups in *Yank*." The sentence about "moral purity" opens a paragraph. Before he closes it, the Postmaster General disappears and Fussell explains that the reason why more skin was not shown was simply because *Yank*'s "function was to soothe, not to excite." The Post Office Department had nothing to do with editorial policy in this case, and if it did, Fussell never mentions it. Blame the gratuitous barb in that opening sentence on Croly the poltergeist.

Generally, Fussell opposes cant and praises precision. This is most evident in his review of *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh,* wherein he laments Waugh's lack of popularity in America (this is pre-PBS *Brideshead Revisited)* by saying, "It's as if Waugh were too clever, as well as 'too hard,' for us. A pity, because he is much needed as an antidote to the current earnestness, literal-mindedness, and verbal slop." Oftentimes, particularly when examining photographs, Fussell immediately gets to the heart of the matter—which may be an unfortunate metaphor in light of an included essay: "Can Graham Greene Write English?" Still, the Croly problem remains, and it is a problem with such magnitude that it undercuts any trust one might develop for the essayist. Good Scouts are supposed to be trustworthy.

For example, in the opening essay, Fussell lauds *The Official Boy Scout Handbook.* About the culture of the Scouts he writes, "the right sort of people don't know much about it. The right sort consists, of course, of liberal intellectuals." Liberal intellectuals are ill-informed innocents. There are others, of course, whom he doesn't explicitly define, but the likes of which can be determined from the following:

> Actually, there's hardly a better gauge for measuring the gross official misbehavior of the seventies than the ethics enshrined in this handbook. From its explicit ethics you can infer such propositions as 'A scout does not tap his acquaintances' telephones,' or 'A scout does not bomb and invade a neutral country, and then lie about it,' or 'A scout does not prosecute war unless, as the Constitution provides, it has been declared by the Congress.' Not to mention that because a scout is clean in thought, word, and deed, he does not, like Richard Nixon, designate his fellow citizens 'shits' and then both record his filth and lie about the recordings ('A scout tells the truth').

In an essay about the effect of modern warfare on the psyche, "Battle Trauma and the NATO Problem," he writes of "Henry Kissinger, the war criminal who managed never to hear a shot fired in anger; and Alexander Haig, the Brown Shirt presidential aspirant." All of this is well below the tenor of most of Fussell's work. Yet there they are, right in the middle of essays that originally appeared in *The New Republic.* Just as Banquo's ghost led to extremes, so has Croly's. Orwell wouldn't take such cheap shots. Nor would—perish the thought—Baden-Powell. Pound would—and did. His subsequent condition should serve as the basis of a cautionary tale for Fussell.

Brothers on the Bench

G. Edward White: *Earl Warren: A Public Life;* Oxford University Press; New York.

Michael E. Parrish: *Felix Frankfurter and His Times;* The Free Press; New York.

by John C. Caiazza

Federal judges form the priesthood of the secular state. Like priests, they wear black robes, preside from an elevated platform, and expect the people to rise when they step upon their altar of justice. Above all, their words have power—immediate, solemn, and mysterious. While one may appeal a judge's ruling, it is only to another judge or panel of judges, for they represent—they are—the sole voice of the law by which our society chooses to govern itself. They claim, further, like any priesthood, to alone have knowledge of a set of sacred texts which those outside the priesthood can neither master nor interpret. These sacred texts are, of course, the laws: the Constitution, all the laws written by the Federal and the state governments, the decisions of long-ago judges set down as precedents, and finally case commentary written by scribes who interpret the interpretations of the judges. While anyone may read them (U.S. and state codes and digests of recent decisions are available at any law library), only those

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trained in the law can really understand them, and only the judges themselves may decide what the laws really mean. Finally, judges have that indispensable prerogative of any priesthood, that its decisions have not just the force of law, which can alter custom, abrogate contracts, and radically change social arrangements, but that they are also taken to be the source of our civil morality. Since we have no other officially accepted source of moral law, judges enunciate not just law in the positive sense—which a man might agree to abide by for the sake of social peace—but a "law above the law," those principles that give a moral force to the law and to which we are encouraged to give our internal assent. Their statements are law because they claim to interpret for us what the civil and, increasingly, the personal *good* is: *"This is true because it is just."*

Two new books enable us to peer more closely into the internal workings of this judicial priesthood: *Earl Warren: A Public Life* by G. Edward White (who, he says, originally wanted to entitle it an "interpretive biography") and *Felix Frankfurter and His Times* by Michael E. Parrish. Warren and Frankfurter both served as justices of the Supreme Court during its most influential time in contemporary history, from 1954 to 1969, or from the year of the *Brown* decision to the year of Warren's retirement as Chief Justice. During this period, many momentous decisions were handed down—on school desegregation, school prayer, Congressional redistricting, the rights of criminals and the accused, pornography—that had more effect on American political and social life than any since the *Dred Scott* decision. To do this the Court had to exercise a degree of power it had hitherto never even approached, for the Supreme Court and eventually the entire Federal judiciary assumed the role of lawmakers, a function constitutionally assigned to the legislative branch of government. How and why the Court was able to assume this role is revealed, in part, in these two workmanlike biographies.

> "[*Earl Warren: A Public Life* is] an exciting biography of this great man."
> —*The New Republic*
>
> "One finishes this book with a renewed respect for Warren."
> —*New York Times Book Review*

Parrish's book on Frankfurter is the first of a planned two-volume account, and it leans heavily on letters written between Frankfurter and his wide circle of friends and acquaintances, including Henry Stimson, Theodore Roosevelt, Louis Brandeis, Learned Hand, and Franklin Roosevelt. The book attempts to convey a sense of the history that formed the background of Frankfurter's time and that Frankfurter helped make: the Sacco-Vanzetti trial, the founding of *The New Republic* as an organ of reform, Zionism, the rise of labor unions, and his involvement in the administrations of three Presidents—Teddy Roosevelt, Taft, and Franklin Roosevelt. White's book on Earl Warren is more concerned with explaining and justifying Earl Warren's time on the bench. Thus, there is considerably less material of a personal and historical nature in White's book than in Parrish's, and more about the law and practical jurisprudence (Parrish's book ends when Frankfurter is appointed to the Supreme Court). Despite their differences in emphasis and treatment, the two books together provide a compelling contrast between the two men whose personalities dominated the Supreme Court for a decade, from 1953 when Warren joined the Court, to 1962 when Frankfurter retired from it.

Frankfurter was talented, quick-witted, a fast talker with a facile mind whose special talent was ingratiating himself with important people. By contrast, Warren was a man of mediocre intellect who won success via thorough devotion to a series of jobs, and who appeared to the public as a bland, hearty fellow with few pretensions. Despite, or perhaps because of, this difference in personality, Warren exerted far more influence on the Court than Frankfurter. Warren was successively a county prosecutor, a district attorney, Attorney General and then Governor of California, and finally Chief Justice. Frankfurter held a number of appointive jobs in Washington before he became a professor at the Harvard Law School, where he engaged in a variety of extracurricular activities which included advising the Presidential campaigns of Al Smith and Franklin Roosevelt. FDR appointed him to the Court in 1939. Frankfurter came to the bench as a legal scholar and social activist influential in the Democratic Party; Warren came with a background as a state administrator and a power-broker among the Republicans.

Despite their differences in temperament, legal skills, and background, they had one element in common: early in their careers, both men had been committed to the Progressive cause, the turn-of-the-century reform movement that presaged much of the thinking of 20th-century liberalism, whose chief agent the Warren Court would become. Both men, in fact, had been strongly influenced by older men who were prominent Progressives: Henry Stimson, candidate for Governor of New York, and Hiram Johnson, Governor of California. Frankfurter worked for Stimson, who called him to Washington during the administration of Teddy Roosevelt; later, Frankfurter took part in Stimson's unsuccessful campaign for Governor, while Warren worked with Johnson's campaign in California, though not in the top echelon. These early commitments formed the background for the later legal thinking of both men.

Progressivism denigrated partisanship, the influence of corporations and business lobbies, and the impact of the flood of new immigrants to the United States. Nativism was a strong element in

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the Progressive movement, which also favored strong executive offices within government, for a strong administrator, whether attorney general, governor, or president, could put reforms into effect regardless of outside pressures favoring the rich and the powerful. This was the era of Robert LaFollette, Jane Addams, Margaret Sanger, and other reformers who, according to Parrish, "believed that under wise and enlightened stewardship (their own, of course), America would experience an upward spiral of human rationality and welfare." Progressivism brought about legislation to protect working people—men, women, and children—by limiting work hours, establishing a minimum wage, providing for worker safety and insurance, and producing legislation to protect the consumers of meat products and to limit the power of large trusts and corporations through antitrust enactments. It also engendered a fascination with engineering social change—which reappeared in the form of 20th-century liberalism, the ideological basis for the more radical decisions of the Warren Court.

Here, however, emerges a dilemma, for although Frankfurter and Warren were both young Progressives, and while this early commitment deeply influenced their decisions on the Supreme Court, they responded in totally different ways. For Warren, who had held executive offices throughout his career, that early commitment to Progressive reform produced an automatic desire, which he never rationally analyzed (Warren was *not* a thinker), to expand the power and range of his office. His experience with corrupt legislatures and conniving gamblers while governor and prosecutor apparently convinced him of his own goodness, justifying any actions he chose to perform for the public good. Just as a material can become dangerously radioactive as a result of bombardment in a nuclear accelerator, so Warren's gentlemanly Progressive urge to reform was transmuted into liberalism—with its unrestrained impulse to rationalize all social relations, protect the processes of democracy at the expense of its substance (thus the nazis march in Skokie courtesy of the First Amendment), and to equalize the actual condition of every citizen of the United States. That Warren did this without a great deal of thought, in violation of most judicial canons, and contrary to the traditional limits of judicial power in America is something that White finds baffling. No theory of jurisprudence can explain or justify it, so he turns to a form of sympathetic, legal psychoanalysis. White's task is made all the more onerous by the notorious contradictions in Warren's career: as a prosecutor he was not overly solicitous of civil rights, as Governor he required all employees of the state of California to take loyalty oaths as a precondition of employment, and he participated wholeheartedly in the internment of Japanese Americans after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

On the other hand, Frankfurter's career is of a piece, and his early Progressivism is reflected in his stance as a Supreme Court justice. Yet Frankfurter was the Warren Court's most forceful expositor of judicial restraint. Why? The answer lies in Frankfurter's commitment to Progressive reform, for it was during his tenure that the Supreme Court struck down a host of reform laws enacted by legislatures and signed into law by governors and presidents. Even with Justices Hughes and Brandeis sitting, the Court declared many reform laws unconstitu-

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tional and gutted Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal in the name of the protection of property rights and the search-and-seizure clause of the Constitution. By what right did the Court do this? Frankfurter, following Oliver Wendell Holmes, argued that the American judiciary had no such right, that it ought not to invalidate laws enacted by legislatures and signed by executive authorities unless those laws were manifestly irrational. Frankfurter followed this doctrine while on the Supreme Court and thus came into deep conflict with Warren, who plunged the Court into a reckless attempt to reform American society without regard for tradition or consistency. The Warren Court, in its search for perfect justice, perpetuated a grave injustice of its own: namely, the tyranny of the judges themselves. That Warren only accidentally became a tyrant, that he acted out of a sense of his own perception of fairness, does not lessen the fact of the tyranny.

There is a law above the law, St. Augustine asserted, and the Western tradition has echoed this from Moses and the prophets through Plato and Aristotle, Jesus of Nazareth, the Stoics, the Medieval Schoolmen, Grotius, Locke, Rousseau, to our own day. But when this insight is used as a means of settling political controversy, or as a means to manage legal conflicts, difficulties arise. Lacking a universally recognized source or authority of natural right, yet convinced that our legal system is meaningless unless it reflects some higher law, the Supreme Court makes decisions that become not exercises in ideal justice, but arbitrary ukases based on the judges' subjective preferences. There is a law above the law, but what is its best enunciation? The Warren Court believed that equality, uniformity of process, and fairness for individuals were the values by which our laws should be judged and which should be injected into the veins of our legal system. Other courts have thought differently, holding a view of the "law above law" based on property rights, for instance. Holmes thought that the only solution, given our pluralism, is for the Court to restrain itself from striking down laws based on a theory of politics. In a famous dissent, Holmes remarked that the "Fourteenth Amendment does not enact Mr. Herbert Spencer's Social Statistics." Neither does it enact Prof. John Rawls's Theory of Justice. □

Life in the Archives

Richard Nixon: *Leaders;* Warner Books; New York.

by Bryce Christensen

In 1621 Francis Bacon was forced out of England's highest legal office by enemies who discovered that he was accepting gifts rather carelessly from anyone who cared to give them—including plaintiffs. In his mandated retirement from politics, Bacon turned to writing about one of the most important public figures of the previous two centuries in his *The History of Henry VII.* In 1974 Richard Nixon was compelled to leave America's highest office when his foes discovered that he apparently had some part in the attempt to cover up the petty burglaries and wire-tapping perpetrated by his subordinates. Out of power, Nixon, like Bacon, has turned to writing about political helmsmen of the past in his *Leaders.* Though Nixon commands neither the virtues of thought nor of style which have immortalized "the trumpeter of the new age," he does enjoy an advantage over Bacon: whereas Bacon knew the founder of the Tudor dynasty only through documents, Nixon knew de Gaulle, Churchill, Khrushchev, and the other world leaders he portrays personally. Indeed, it is Nixon's personal involvement with his subjects that accounts for most of the strengths—as well as a few of the deficiencies—of his depictions.

In evaluating Churchill as a historian, Nixon comments: "I have found him to be a much better writer when describing events in which he was not directly involved. . . . Churchill's reflections and observations often get in the way." At times the reader may wish to turn this evaluation back on *Leaders.* Richard Nixon is in the background of all the portraits and occasionally steps into the foreground, obscuring our view of the statesman under consideration. The potentially poignant conclusion of de Gaulle's funeral, for example, is ruined for narrator *and* reader when the description of "the stirring strains of 'The Marseillaise'" is gratuitously interrupted by an account of how "another foreign guest, oblivious of the music, reached out to

grab [Nixon's] hand." But more often Nixon's personal "reflections and observations" do not "get in the way" but rather illuminate it. When, for instance, he describes how he carefully prepared welcoming remarks for Churchill but

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never had a chance to use them, he is not merely indulging in autobiographical detail but is showing how Churchill, even at 79, seized the initiative to speak rather than waiting for an invitation. (Observes Nixon wryly: "The remarks I had so painstakingly prepared were never delivered, but neither did they seem to be missed.") Consequently, those Nixon describes most satisfactorily are those with whom he had the most personal experience: the tender father who consciously created the imperious de Gaulle mask; the witty and capable Shigeru Yoshida who smoked his cigars and cracked his jokes in the shadow of MacArthur; the earthy, brutal, and insecure Khrushchev who made buffoonery a political weapon at the U.N. and at the banquet table; the sophisticated but ruthless Chou En-lai who hid the hardness of a killer behind the appealing manners of a Confucian gentleman. In these and other representations, the vitality of lived experience animates Nixon's work: we *feel* Khrushchev's thumb being jammed into the chest; we *see* the retired MacArthur nervously pacing his apartment and we *hear* his boastful plan to "straighten out the Pentagon in a month" if only Eisenhower will make him Secretary of Defense. It is this kind of immediate detail from personal experience that makes the people in Nixon's book once again living people, not dusty museum pieces.

To be sure, Nixon has read extensively in the writings by and about his subjects, but when forced (as in the chapter on Churchill) to rely heavily on the observations of others, his focus at times becomes fuzzy and his analysis less than fully convincing. Not surprisingly, therefore, though the general comments he makes in his introductory and concluding chapters are usually sensible and are often buttressed by quotes from Shakespeare, Sophocles, Carlyle, or Johnson, they never coalesce into a rigorous or consistent philosophical world view of the sort Bacon developed in his essays. For Nixon, "the crucial moral questions are . . . those of the bottom line," that is, of *doing;* hence, he provides no rational basis for admiring noble but futile political ventures, and he leaves many important issues shrouded in the leader's unexplored "instinct." On a range of important issues, Nixon's own instincts *do* seem quite healthy: without apparent cognitive reason, he admires Adenauer for his bootless opposition to the nazis, and—of greater contemporary importance—he shares with Adenauer, Churchill, de Gaulle, and MacArthur a visceral hostility to communism, both as an ideology and as a historical reality. For that reason, his successful resurrection of his subjects—communist and anticommunist—is critically more important than Bacon's resuscitation of Henry Tudor was in 1622. While they lived, the Western giants Nixon depicts kept in plain view the ugly truth about communism and about communists like En-lai and Khrushchev. Now that they are dead, liberal pygmies are busily promoting the lie that there is not now and never was any good reason for vigorous anticommunism in West or East since En-lai was actually the savior (not the murderer) of his people and Khrushchev was merely an innocuously amusing clown whose joke about "burying" America should not be taken seriously. Knowledgeable Americans will sincerely hope that, speaking in their own revivified voices, the figures in Nixon's *Leaders* can explode this new and mendacious view of our recent past. For as Bacon observed, "It is not the lie that passeth through the mind, but the lie that sinketh in and settleth in it that doth hurt." □

Soul Searching

***The Literary Essays of Thomas Merton;* Edited by Brother Patrick Hart; New Directions; New York.**

by Edward J. Walsh

The legacy of Thomas Merton, Trappist monk, is not primarily that of a literary critic. In addition to his powerful autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain,* Merton published dozens of meditations, many in the idiom of the poet, but which are still primarily religious. In his last years he spoke out on political themes and was branded a radical. He is not known today as a man of strong, developed views on secular literature. This aspect of the generally held wisdom about Merton is reaffirmed by the 56 essays and critical pieces contained in this anthology. Most anthologies are not impartial collections, each selection an equal part of a larger whole, but rather showcases in which the author's best work is set off by the lesser pieces. New Directions' Merton *Essays* is no different. We see in them a truth about Merton that has never been seriously challenged: that he was, first and last, a contemplative, a man of God.

This is a significant undertaking for a publishing house today, and New Directions, which produced nine of Merton's books including his *Collected Poems,* is to be commended. The marketing strategy on Merton, one might think, perhaps cynically, would be to build up an image of a radical priest who disobeyed his superiors in order to speak his mind on what is now called the "social agenda" of the Church. Such a view of Merton, however, is wishful thinking—by both his contemporary leftist admirers and the publishing-house press agents who see dissident priests as hot literary property —that does not apply to Thomas Merton. Thomas Merton never metamorphosed from a simple man of God to a fiery church radical, although one can pluck many sweeping statements on "social justice" from his work. Despite

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LIBERAL CULTURE

Violently Good Taste

Iggy Pop is precisely the kind of rock specimen that many think of when mention is made of that breed: vile, corrupt, sordid, and so on. Recently *High Times* magazine, perhaps in testimony to its high-level concern with literature and the arts, ran excerpts from Mr. Pop's memoirs, *I Need More*. In them, Mr. Pop describes the reactions of those listening to his wailings:

> I've been spit at, I've been slugged, I've been egged, I've been hit with paper clips, money, cameras, brassieres, underwear, old rags and with expensive garments and belts and things. I've been hit with, well, a slingshot.

He adds, unremorsefully, "Yeah, you just get used to it after a while." Mr. Pop singles out his experiences in Detroit, where he has been pelted with missiles ranging from whiskey bottles to grapefruits and knocked cold on at least two occasions. Detroit, according to testimony in *Rolling Stone* from figures including Mick Jagger, is supposed to have the best audiences in the world. Taste, however, has no bounds. And once again, Detroit faces foreign competition. Describing the events on a recent European tour, where half of his band was beat up, Mr. Pop notes, "Marseilles may be meaner than Detroit." Those in the land of Lee Iacocca undoubtedly won't stand for that. □

the neat fit these make with the leftist agenda of the 1960's, when he wrote most of them, the writer never strayed from his central spiritual message: the historic teaching of the Catholic Church that earthly life should be a path to oneness with Christ, and that all men have a contemplative aspect that leads them to God. In "Poetry and Contemplation," Merton tells us that "Contemplation is the fullness of the Christian vocation—the full flowering of baptismal grace and of the Christ-life in our souls." Contemplation—not changing the world.

Still, Merton grew at Gethsemani into an energetic, assertive public figure at odds with the monastic drill. But he changed primarily because Gethsemani was changing, to his dismay. Although he suffered in the drafty monastery, he fought bitterly to prevent the Abbot from implementing modern procedures of business administration on the monastery farm, and he opposed plans to establish a cheese and fruitcake business. As Monica Furlong tells it in her biography of Merton, he hated the grinding roar of the new farm machinery that broke the monastic peace, skewed the old contemplative routine, and, in Merton's view, created an atmosphere of modern, office-shop boredom that chased away novices with serious vocations. As a monk, as a man of God, Merton grew more conservative as the years passed, not more radical. It was his deep devotion to the transcendent that led him to read Protestant spiritual writings, Buddhist and Hindu meditations, and, eventually, anything that referred even fleetingly to religion, including the shallow moralistic writing that rationalized radical political activism. It was his tireless investigation of things spiritual that led him away from Gethsemani to study the religions of the East, to Bangkok and to his death in 1968. This is the only way to look at Merton's writing about literature.

The first essay in this anthology, "Blake and the New Theology," confronts the "Merton myth" head-on. Merton, who wrote his master's thesis at Columbia on William Blake, scoffs at the position of radical theologian Thomas Altizer, who in a book entitled *The New Apocalypse* attempted to make Blake a hero of the religious left. As Merton puts it, "Altizer, the radical American God-is-dead theologian [in his] Blakean trail . . . drafts Blake with all his works into the militant ranks of new anti-religious Christians." Obviously Merton did not place himself among these "new" Christians. His analysis of Blake maps out his own place. He views him as "radical" in the sense that John the Baptist was, castigating the complacency of contemporary religious institutions. "Blake saw official Christianity as a *narrowing* of vision, a foreclosure of experience and of future expansion. He substituted for it a Christianity of openness, of total vision, a faith which diametrically embraces both extremes." This was also Merton's ambition. He utterly destroys Altizer's view of Blake as a Hegelian or a Marxist and proposes his own: that Blake was an authentic Christian mystic with his heritage in the mysticism of the early Church. Merton came to believe that such a practice of Christianity was hindered by the smugness of the Church hierarchy, including even the leadership of his own order.

Similarly, Merton's lengthy essays on Pasternak develop and defend a position that *Doctor Zhivago*, which was hailed in the West as an anti-Soviet polemic, is actually a study of a lifelong journey to spirituality and to Christ. Here he is on solid ground. Pasternak himself wrote: "How many things in this world deserve our loyalty? Very few indeed. [But] one must be true to immortality—true to Christ." To Merton, "The Christ of Pasternak is the Christ Who has liberated man from death and Who lives in man,

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waiting for man's liberty to give Him a chance to transform the world by love." He traces Pasternak's career and spiritual development from the 1920's, when he wrote ambiguous political poems for which he was both praised and condemned by the Communist Party, through his ordeal after publication of *Zhivago.* He believed that much of Pasternak's suffering at the hands of the Soviet government and literary establishment can be blamed on the West for seizing on *Zhivago* as an anticommunist tract, when, as he writes, "The protest of *Dr. Zhivago* is spiritual, not political, not sociological, not pragmatic. It is religious, aesthetic, and mystical." Merton was particularly fond of Pasternak and corresponded with him from 1958, before the appearance of *Zhivago,* until the persecuted Soviet author's death. Their intellectual and spiritual kinship was deep, and while Pasternak suffered scorn and ostracism in his homeland, as well as the loss of the proffered Nobel Prize, Merton, in the United States, cried out that he was misunderstood in the West as well. His letters and essays in defense of Pasternak, although laced with moody and bitter criticism of capitalism, are actually an eloquent explication of Christian spirituality transcending politics.

Such is the theme of all of Merton's writing on literature. He studied closely the works of 20th-century writers—Camus, Faulkner, Joyce, the Latin American poets—who, like him, grappled with the contradictions between the seedy materialism of modern culture and a higher moral code. Merton felt a special sympathy for Camus. He expended much time and energy combing his novels, plays, and the *Notebooks,* searching for intimations of Christian sensibility. His analysis of Pere Paneloux, the Jesuit hero of *The Plague,* holds that Camus invested him with an ambiguous mix of Christian and secular values. Paneloux, Merton wrote, is both Christian and Nietzschean, a disciple of St. Augustine who at the same time expresses a disillusioned fatalism about the pervasiveness of evil. This, Merton exclaims, *is* Camus: he was *almost* a Christian. The problem is that he was exposed to a "distorted" idea of grace. "Grace," in Camus's eyes was nothing more than the "state of smug self-assurance by which the elect convince themselves of their election." This is the view of grace in *The Plague,* in which Rieux and Tarrou, Camus's "saints without God," practice charity.

Merton explains that "Camus' deepest affirmation is that of an almost traditional and classic humanism, with a few significant modern doubts, austerities, and reservations." He suggests that Camus was alienated by his exposure to French Catholic collaborationists during the war, and held back by a conscience too exquisitely scrupulous to accept membership in a historic community of less-than-perfect believers. "The peculiar isolation of Camus' position comes from his inability to cope with the idea of God and of faith to which his sense of justice and his instinctive nonviolence nevertheless enticed him." This is an "inability," to be sure. Does it merit the sympathy Merton showers on Camus? Instead of recognizing Camus as indecisive and unwilling to make an orthodox commitment to faith, Merton again blames the modern institution of the Church.

In his later years, Merton walked a self-drawn line between highbrow advocacy of the leftist social agenda and literate, eloquent explorations of man's

LIBERAL CULTURE

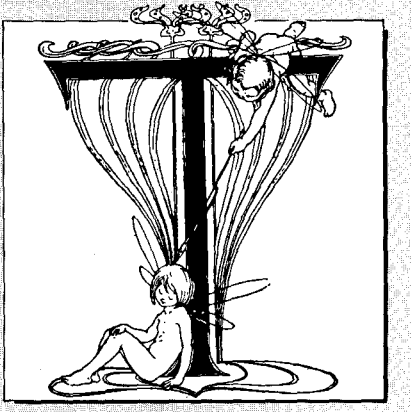
Quantification Style

Mr. John Simon admiringly describes in *Rolling Stone* the youthful but sexually overripe femininity of a barely post-adolescent, very much "in" movie "star" by the name of Nastassia Kinski. He characterizes her as, "at twenty-one, the biggest sex symbol of 1982."

How he measures the bigness of a sex symbol is not only logically obscure but also grammatically untidy and semantically slipshod, especially when we recall that his reputation is that of an intellectual beacon of modern New York criticism. Mr. Simon's routine is to offer slapdash opinions that are hailed as provoking by the halfwits of the liberal press. He is also the film "critic" for *National Review* (?), where he oozes judgments on "stars" but never on normative ethics. What a *National Review* contributor is doing in the pages of *Rolling Stone* we do not know; his presence there is, to our mind, a matter not of freedom of expression but of one's sense of smell and taste, not of eclecticism but of dignity. But Mr. Simon elaborates on Ms. Kinski's illustrated seminudity for the hosting organ:

> The breasts are perfect, though some might think them a bit small, pubescent . . .

Which makes him less a critic and more a quintessential kibitzer. Such a "literary" attitude sells well nowadays: it is cheap, easily merchandised, it moves smoothly through journalistic K-Marts of the *Rolling Stone* brand. But what does it have in common with criticism? □



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contemplative nature. Often he fell, or threw himself, off the wall between the two. His interest in Latin American poets was encouraged by his friendship with Nicaraguan Trappist Ernesto Cardenal, a poet who was for a time a novice under Merton at Gethsemani. Merton's fascination with the tortured spirituality of the Latins turned into uncritical endorsement of all sorts of ugly political currents that he almost certainly never understood or foresaw. Cardenal returned to Nicaragua and eventually became active in the Marxist Sandinista movement, no doubt telling his fellow guerrillas, who included a number of priests, that a prominent American monk was defending them. All Merton was defending, in his essays on the Nicaraguan Ruben Dario and other Latin poets, was a vague search for "social justice." Unfortunately, social justice in the underdeveloped world is too easily translated into Marxist revolution.

Merton's contemplative conscience was fully exercised in his literary lectures to the novices at Gethsemani, which began when he became Master of Novices in 1965. In January of 1967 he began his series of discussions called "The Classical Values in William Faulkner," brilliant, often extemporaneous talks which the monks preserved on tape. In Faulkner, Merton found the timeless spiritual themes on which he patterned his own life: repentance, religion and creativity, resurrection. He finds in all of Faulkner's work an intense spirituality that glows brighter for the shabbiness of its surroundings. He saw in Faulkner's work—especially in *The Bear, Requiem, The Wild Palms,* and *The Sound and the Fury*—a vast metaphor of the struggle for salvation against the violent backdrop of modern culture: salvation earned, although not always understood, by the poorest of God's poor.

Merton wrote prolifically. His pen, of course, was his only real outlet. His connection with the world was almost wholly through books, letters, an occasional newspaper. His views on political and social topics, far from being the result of personal experience, were reflections through an assortment of prisms, the effects of which could cause distortions. And distortions were perceived in many cases. Merton railed against capitalism, the "white" culture, Pentagon warmongers, and the whole range of leftist targets in the 60's. He said some reckless things and supported some shabby political enterprises. Still, it's possible and necessary to sort these out from the surplus of impressions that has collected around the true picture of Thomas Merton. After all, this is the priest who wrote: "By the light of infused wisdom, we enter deeply into the Mystery of Christ Who is Himself the light of men. We participate, as it were, in the glory that is radiated mystically by His risen and transformed Humanity." All Merton's works—contemplative, literary, and political—were bent toward feeling the light of Christ's wisdom in his soul. He therefore fought heroically against the death wish of contemporary mass culture, even occasionally lashing out impulsively. His errors and overstatements were, not unexpectedly, highlighted and trumpeted by opportunists whose goals were political, not spiritual. Politics was not Merton's arena. Neither was literature. He did discover some profound truths about modern literature and modern culture. But, with all his brilliance, his purpose was a higher one.

In the forthcoming issue of *Chronicles of Culture:*

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—from the Comment by Thomas Molnar

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An Achiever's Lot

Norman Polmar and Thomas B. Allen: *Rickover;* Simon & Schuster; New York.

by Otto J. Scott

Some years ago, Norman Polmar, a distinguished naval analyst and editor of the U.S. section of *Jane's Fighting Ships,* authored *The Death of the Thresher,* which describes a nuclear-powered submarine that sank in the Atlantic in 1963 with the loss of 129 men. In his description of this tragedy, Polmar indicated that the problems of the *Thresher* may have started with the failure of its nuclear reactor. Admiral Rickover, angered by the imputation that an area under his control might have been fallible, informed Polmar that he, Rickover, would never again have anything to do with the author. That dismissal—and insult—might have been one of Hyman George Rickover's more significant errors. For Norman Polmar eventually teamed up with Thomas B. Allen to produce an exhaustive examination of Rickover. It seems unlikely that Rickover's reputation—which for many years was as untouchable (at least officially) as those of J. Edgar Hoover and Major-General Lewis B. Hershey, men "whose tenure was beyond control of logic or reason" —will ever again look as admirable as it once did.

The authors detail numerous anecdotes that reveal a man bristling with paradoxical positions; Rickover, who fulminated against political influence, social status, and favoritism all his life, was himself, it's shown, the nation's most outstanding example of all three. That Rickover enjoyed a special status is well known; what is less well known but deserves examination is that he continued to act like an abused and martyred person while actually wielding autocratic and unchecked authority. This contradiction is not unknown; Latin Americans refer to persons who move upward on the societal scale from a modest to a powerful position while retaining the emotional and political attitudes of their origins as being "complexed." In the future, the figure of Rickover may serve as a prototype of the genus in our society.

If that were all that could be said of the historical Rickover, however, it would hardly merit the enormous tome that Polmar and Allen have produced. Rickover's claim for enduring historical importance is based upon his influence over and within the United States Navy. It is here that the expertise of the authors becomes apparent. They have examined official and unofficial files, public and private records, media sources; they have interviewed Rickover's allies and protégés as well as his critics and opponents. In the course of this exercise they establish that Rickover was neither the first nor the only Naval officer to champion the cause of nuclear-powered submarines and surface vessels. The Navy was sufficiently interested in the nuclear approach to establish a special branch for it as early as 1939, and it pursued the effort diligently, though behind the scenes, throughout World War II—a period when Rickover was assigned to various naval shipyards.

That information is no great surprise to anyone acquainted with the exaggerations that distort the subject of nuclear energy. Dr. Vannevar Bush, coordinator of the U.S. scientific program in World War II, could never overcome his irritation and astonishment that a letter from Albert Einstein to FDR was credited by the media with launching the U.S. atomic-energy program. "By the time that letter was sent," Bush growled, "we had been busy for quite a while." That is true. But it is also true that Einstein's great prestige helped convince significant persons in Congress and elsewhere that the program deserved complete and unquestioning support—and that was more than Dr. Bush could have achieved with a letter. It was not Einstein but his admirers who launched that myth; he was, in other words, used to forward a venture which proved highly successful. Hyman Rickover created his own myth—with the help of the media. His myth was that he created the Navy's nuclear program against great odds, when in fact he was transferred into an ongoing program created by the Bureau of Ships and the Atomic Energy Commission, and he had extraordinary support and cooperation.

In the course of managing the Naval reactor program, Rickover proved to be efficient but difficult. Nevertheless, he had supporters with high Naval rank, and members of Congress were impressed with him. His appearances on the Hill were effective, and funds for nuclear-powered vessels were allocated with little argument. Rickover's relations with the press were also very cordial, and he accumulated an impressive batch of clippings. One special admirer was Clay Blair, Jr., a staff member of *Time-Life,* to

Mr. Scott is a frequent contributor to these pages.

In the Mail

***The Trans-Atlantic Crisis: A Conference of the Committee for the Free World;* The Orwell Press; New York.** One thing is clear from the lively papers and exchanges: the noun *crisis* should be in the plural form.

***James Henry Hammond and the Old South: A Design for Mastery* by Drew Gilpin Faust; Louisiana State University Press; Baton Rouge.** Confounds the stereotype of the plantation owner as a julep-sipping boor.

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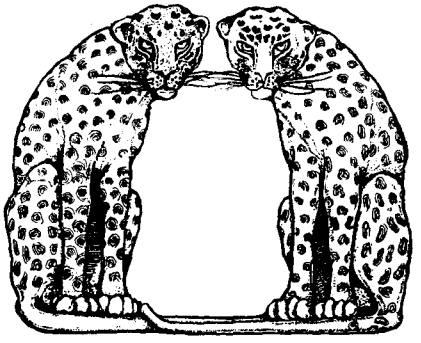
whom Rickover was a hero. When Rickover was passed over for promotion to Rear Admiral and faced retirement, Blair decided that Rickover was being treated unjustly. In order to develop this theme he was given a Naval office and a secretary by Rickover, who acted as editor for an encomium that Blair produced. A full-scale, and ultimately successful, campaign was launched. Implicit in this campaign was the argument that Rickover was, and had for years been, a victim of anti-Semitism. This claim of prejudice was accepted by many, and it spread throughout the nation. It gained credibility when Rickover's Annapolis years were confused with those of his classmate, Leonard Kaplan. Kaplan competed against one of the most popular of all Annapolis students, a star athlete and scholar; he was, apparently because of anti-Semitism exacerbated by personality collisions, sent into Coventry. In the yearbook of Rickover's class, Kaplan's photograph appeared on an unnumbered, perforated page. It is remarkable that after such an experience Kaplan proceeded with a respectable Naval career. His son later entered the same service.

The Kaplan episode occurred in the 1920's; it could not have occurred in the postwar 50's, when not only anti-Semitism, but such ugly manifestations of injustice and dislike against any individual, were relegated to partisans of the lunatic fringe. Rickover's failure to achieve promotion from the Review Board seems, as Senator Javits said, "more a Billy Mitchell case than a Dreyfus case." In other words, it was not Rickover's origins that were involved, but his acerbic and competitive relationship with the leaders of the Navy—a matter of discipline and differences over policy.

That the charge of prejudice worked in Rickover's favor and cast his critics in an unenviable light was only one consequence of the Blair/Rickover campaign. A more lasting result was that his critics were silenced lest they be judged guilty of malignity. A great media uproar caused the Review Board (for perhaps the first time in Naval history) to reconsider. Rickover became a Rear Admiral.

From then on Rickover was barely controllable by Naval authority. Polmar and Allen compare his appearances before Congress with those of J. Edgar Hoover. It has been said that Hoover's power was based upon private information, but the fact seems to be that until his last years, Hoover was maintained by



the press. Much the same appears to have been true for Rickover. And, bearing out Acton's aphorism, Rickover succumbed to the heady sensation of being able to tell his titular bosses to go to hell whenever the spirit moved him. Rickover's behavior grew bizarre. He rarely wore a uniform, and then only in response to special, official orders. His subordinates did not wear uniforms either, and the authors make it clear that Rickover would not have approved of the habit of dressing in one. Rickover could choose men on all levels to be transferred to his branch, could keep them beyond the Navy's official rotation time applied to all other branches, and could use them as he saw fit, without regard to rank. Under Rickover, a commander might take orders from a lieutenant. Dissidents were treated in a manner unknown in the rest of the Navy or civilian life. Even as he exercised tyrannical power, Rickover would describe himself as persecuted, struggling against tremendous odds, hampered by a mentally deficient Navy leadership.

These tactics were remarkably successful. Rickover rose to full Admiral, and his career continued into his eighties. He was a service politician who used the media, general myth, and existing prejudice against tradition and brass hats to distort Naval procedures, to elevate his favorites and disgrace those he disliked in ways that went beyond all the rules, regulations, and accepted standards. His cruelty toward persons who incurred his disfavor is described by the authors and makes unpleasant reading. Admiral Zumwalt, who battled Rickover unsuccessfully, in his autobiography *On Watch* included an account of the humiliating tactics Rickover used.

Zumwalt's main argument, however, is that Rickover injured the Navy by twisting its priorities, using excessive funds in nuclear-powered ship construction, and thus kept the Navy from developing other equally essential vessels. Only a full-scale war will disclose whether Zumwalt is correct or not. What is beyond argument is that Rickover worked in demonic fashion to build nuclear vessels.

Former President Jimmy Carter, who is proud of having been accepted into Rickover's branch (a distinction equivalent to being accepted on a chattel slave block), did not have the sense or the courage to retire the Admiral. Nor did Gerald Ford, Richard Nixon, or Lyndon Johnson. Rickover retained his media alliance until his eccentricities expanded into a loathing for television and journalists, and into reckless expressions of this prejudice. Before that, though, Rickover had enraged the nation's educators by a series of attacks on public education (mostly well-deserved), and infuriated many others by his engineer's dream of a scientific elite cast in his own image.

Until he achieved unreasonable authority, Rickover seems to have been a classic engineer with all the virtues and deficiencies of that calling. He was expert at handling inanimate objects, off the mark in dealing with human beings other than Congressmen or journalists. In his last years he fell into disputes with shipbuilding firms, contractors, and nearly everyone with whom he came in

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contact. As a man, he was a harsh critic but unable to accept the faintest criticism. He seems to have forgiven any fault or excess in himself, but could not forgive or forget anyone who crossed him. Vociferous against favoritism, he was the greatest favorite in the history of the United States Navy. Disdainful of social sets, he seems to have been unaware of the fact that he was the representative of a powerful American group and the beneficiary of its connections. Scornful of the earned rank and privileges of others, he energetically protested any slight to his own rank or privileges. Hyman Rickover was a man who took advantage of every situation, but who, nevertheless, managed to achieve a nuclear-powered Navy that may, in the oncoming crisis, save the United States of America. □

Overblown Fiction & Urban Renewal

John Gardner: *Mickelsson's Ghosts;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

Jimmy Breslin: *Forsaking All Others;* Simon & Schuster; New York.

by Linda Thorne

September 14, 1982 was a television newscaster's dilemma: two notable figures suddenly and violently dead and the question of which story to lead with. One Chicago station flashed on the screen first Princess Grace's picture, then the ravaged streets of Beirut. Although the rubble and dead bodies were sadly familiar sights, this time death was not anonymous; it had a name: Bashir Gemayel. Later in the broadcast came the news of another sudden and violent death on that day: novelist John Gardner, 49, after a motorcycle accident in Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania.

The next day's newspapers brought retrospectives on all three lives, Gardner's, of course, further back and accomplished with fewer words. The *Washington Post's* feature quoted Gardner from an interview conducted last July. Speaking on himself and his art, he said:

> You know, I think I'm a really great artist. . . . It's the same as motorcycle racing. You believe in something and you push it and you just don't worry about what's going to happen.

This statement was apparently a reply to his critics' lukewarm or negative reviews of *Mickelsson's Ghosts.* The metaphor proved to be a tragic one. Though the telling of *Mickelsson's Ghosts* may be compared to a motorcycle race in which the twists and turns often seem careless and the finish line ill-defined, Gardner, whether or not he actually viewed the artist as motorcyclist, held definite opinions on the role of the artist vis-à-vis his audience. Somewhere between *October Light* (which won the 1977 National Book Critics Circle Award) and *Mickelsson's Ghosts,* John Gardner published a book on literary criticism titled *On Moral Fiction.* Beyond (or besides) being a motorcyclist, Gardner believed, the true artist is a moralist, seeking to improve life.

> The true artist's purpose, and the purpose of the true critic after him, is to show what is healthy, in other words *sane,* in human seeing, thinking, and feeling, and to point out what is not. He may point out what is central to the healthy function of the human spirit—he may deal with morals—in which case his work, if it is successful, is major; or he may point out what is healthy and unhealthy in relatively trivial situations—he may deal with morality as it is reflected in manners—in which case his work is minor.

For sane, one may substitute "good," "life-affirming," and, of course, "moral." The true artist does not simply hold a mirror up to nature. He magnifies the good, diminishes the bad, ameliorates mankind.

This, one may assume, is the task that Gardner, as moral artist, set out to accomplish in *Mickelsson's Ghosts.* One may also assume that this was to be a "major"—not "minor"—work since the situations described are hardly trivial. Rather, for one man to experience them all in one year's time, they more resemble the fantastic, even the absurd. Mickelsson, an eminent philosophy professor, is beginning his tenure at the State University of New York at Binghamton. He has left Brown University, his psychiatrist, and his ex-wife (with her young lover) in Providence, where he was known to walk the streets while dressed in a crimson coat and talk to dead animals. Though both his wife and the Internal Revenue Service are vying for a sum which is several thousand dollars more per year than Mickelsson earns—his wife for alimony and the IRS for back taxes—he nonetheless buys a dilapidated old house in Susquehanna County and painstakingly restores it. The house is haunted, and Peter Mickelsson is "haunted" himself. He hears the ghosts, he sees them, he dreams about them—one is never sure with Mickelsson what is dream and what is hallucination. (The ghosts, too, have had hard lives: sister and brother, they've had an incestuous relationship which culminates in a murder-suicide.) Mickelsson is alternately—or simultaneously—in love with a beautiful, brilliant sociology professor and with a teenage Susquehanna prostitute. He nearly kills a man and is nearly murdered himself by a soft-spoken fellow philosophy professor who also happens to be a member of a Mormon assassination team.

These are not trivial situations. Yet these are situations surrounded by so much trivia in the form of unnecessary detail that, like poor Mickelsson in the

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throes of madness, the reader often feels overwhelmed. That Mickelsson has a keen eye and mind one has no doubt. He observes, he ruminates constantly and at length about philosophers living and dead, about his childhood, his marriage, his psychotic episodes—all these, along with the former inhabitants of his house, are the "ghosts" of the book's title. The problem is that nothing escapes his attention—from the troll doll hanging from his jeep's rearview mirror to the week's grocery list.

This "grocery list syndrome"—the elevation of the trivial—is one of the issues Gardner addressed in *On Moral Fiction:*

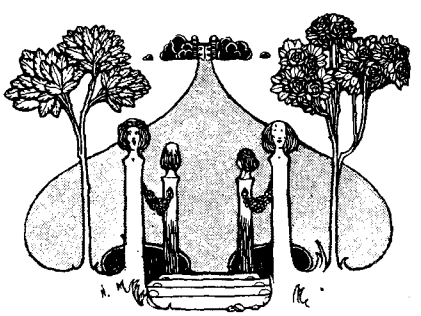
> The moment the artistic or critical mind loses sight of the whole, focusing all attention on, say, the flexibility of the trowel, the project begins to fail, the wall begins to crack with undue rapidity (we expected all along that the wall would crack, but not like this! not there and there!) and the builder becomes panicky, ferocious, increasingly inefficient.

Since Gardner has Mickelsson spending a great deal of time remodeling his old house, this is a particularly apt metaphor —and a particularly telling one. Even though Gardner recognized this failing on an intellectual level, as an artist he violates his own principle.

From this sea of details Gardner would like his audience to seize on, in his own words, "what is central to the healthy function of the human spirit." As a guide we have Peter Mickelsson, an Everyman—and more particularly every 20th-century man—perched precariously between destruction and discovery. Mickelsson, the philosopher-prophet-madman, realizes that man is driving himself to destruction, indeed he, himself, has been driven to madness with that realization. Among the evil forces are ambiguous moral standards in general, the unlawful disposal of nuclear waste, religious fanaticism, and, as in Mickelsson's own case, too much self-absorption. Though most readers will already know the so-called "moral truths" connected with these issues before opening the book, Mickelsson presumably has not found the answers at the end of this 590-page odyssey: he's more mad than ever. And what Gardner has, when all is said and done, is a minor work disguised as a major one which might have been accomplished twice as well in half the space.

"How many of them will outlast the century?" is a question Gardner poses about his contemporaries in *On Moral Fiction.* He dismisses Porter, Coover, and Gaddis on the grounds of "pure meanness"; Pynchon, Updike, and Barth for "intellectual blight, academic narrowness, or fakery"; gives a "maybe" to Malamud, Guy Davenport, Welty, Oates, and Salinger. Not even mentioned is Jimmy Breslin, the author of *Forsaking All Others,* a novel which will probably be read by more people than will Gardner's.

If Breslin has an artistic theory, I haven't heard of it. As a man who makes his living as a journalist, his edict may well be the one espoused by newspaper publishers: "What the public wants, the public gets," or "up go the profits." There is certainly enough violence to appeal to the general public and not much way to avoid it given the book's subject matter: a battle for control of the Bronx drug trade. Put succinctly, the Puerto Ricans are impinging on the Mafia's territory, and the Mafia doesn't like it. Several murders ensue: on street corners, swiftly accomplished by gunmen who are chauffeured away in sleek black cars; in bars, in front of several witnesses but not one who will ante up to the police; and two particularly grisly ones involving chain saws. The two opposing warlords are Louis Mariani, who leads a respectable upper-middle-class existence in suburban New Jersey, and a man known only as Teenager, who conducts his business from the back of a bar, wears expensive but flashy jewelry, and talks in a typical "cool guy/macho man" vernacular. In short, the stuff of which stereotypes are made. Like the name Breslin assigns one of his major characters, connoting a person yet unformed, much of the work itself is immature, filled with clichés.



But the novel is not simply a seamy tale about the drug trade in a big-city ghetto. It is also a love story which, according to its dust jacket, is "as dangerous, doomed, and passionate as that of Romeo and Juliet." At least some of the people who read the book will be unaware that this was originally a play by Shakespeare, not a movie by Franco Zefferelli or a record from the early 1960's on the Motown label. The principals in Breslin's version are Nicki Mariani and Maximo Escobar. Nicki, the daughter of the Mafia kingpin previously mentioned, is waiting for her husband's release from prison. Maximo, a lifelong friend of Teenager and a Harvard-educated lawyer, is trying to escape the fate of the ghetto dweller. Their usual dialogues are certainly not the stuff of Shakespeare. Nicki's most frequent utterance regarding Maximo is that he looks like "a f------ movie star." Maximo, even with his Ivy League education, is not much more eloquent.

Since there are so many references to Maximo's movie-star qualities, perhaps film is the proper medium for Breslin's work—where the story could be told in splashy technicolor in a couple of hours and where the profits realized would be more lucrative—because a novelist he is not. *Forsaking All Others* is a mildly entertaining book, nothing more. It bears no resemblance to the love story of Mr. Montague and Miss Capulet, nor to a serious piece of fiction. □

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Hope Wanted

Julian L. Simon: *The Ultimate Resource;* Princeton University Press; Princeton, NJ.

Ken Auletta: *The Underclass;* Random House; New York.

by John Shelton Reed

The cover of Julian Simon's book tells the story: "Natural resources are getting *less* scarce." "Pollution in the U.S. has been decreasing." "The world's food supply is improving." "Population growth has long-term benefits." *The Ultimate Resource* is a debunking book, new-style. The conventional wisdom is wrong: the end isn't at hand. Simon's argument is easy to summarize, much harder to evaluate. His economics is a cheerful science preaching a sort of supply-side environmentalism. The ultimate resource is human ingenuity. Thanks to that, straight-line extrapolations have always been wrong and, Simon believes, will continue to be wrong. New problems bring forth new and unpredictable solutions; demand can create its own supply. An important corollary is that population growth increases the pool of ingenious human beings and hence the number and variety of solutions both to old problems and to the new problems produced, for example, by population growth.

The argument is much more closely reasoned and much more persuasive than this summary. Simon illustrates his point with examples from an amazing variety of times and places, and the book is written in a style as close to words of one syllable as its subject matter allows. Simon is a fine writer and rhetorician, and I came away persuaded. Simon has also persuaded himself: he wagers $10,000 that a basket of raw materials will be cheaper in the future than it is now. His put-up-or-shut-up challenge to the doomsayers is made only slightly less impressive by the fact that there will be no one around to collect if their worst-case predictions are realized. Of course, if past performance is any guide (to use Simon's characteristic mode of argument) those predictions *will* be wrong. Predictions of apocalypse are one commodity for which supply has surely outpaced demand of late; some prophets have been foolhardy enough to give specific dates for catastrophe: for example *Famine—1975.*

Simon's argument ultimately rests on faith—or, if that's too strong a word, confidence—that we can cope in the future, as we have in the past. It's a reasonable premise. Our species' record of coping with what look like unfavorable trends or even with calamitous discontinuities is indeed heartening. But when we face known problems with solutions that are merely hypothetical and possibly unknowable, many of us react like Wall Street contemplating supply-side fiscal policy: we get nervous. How much more comforting to *know* what's in store (or at least, as Simon would doubtless insist, to believe incorrectly that we know). That comfort has a value: some might find a predictable future, or the illusion of one, preferable to one that is optimal in some other terms.

Perhaps this reflects our fallen nature. Simon's faith that the species will provide is empirically grounded, but it superficially resembles the faith that the Lord will provide. Simon's injunctions are like the biblical ones to take no thought for the morrow and to let the evil of the day be sufficient thereunto: hard sayings, with which only fools and heroes can be entirely at ease. The sort of dynamic, fluid, "open-systems" world that Simon describes may be an accurate picture of reality—it is certainly more inviting than Paul Ehrlich's view of the future—but only an economist could *love* it.

However, even if we could know what what sorts of solutions ingenuity will provide, even if those solutions could be counted on to produce a situation better in some ways than what we have now, things wouldn't be the same. Continuity is a special case of predictability, and even harder to assure. In part, the reason is that holding one element constant requires that others be manipulated: for instance, the sort of coercion necessary to arrest population growth would itself be an obnoxious innovation. (One of Simon's great services is to show how any course of action, including inaction, is rooted in values. He clarifies those which are implicit in a number of the choices we

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face, and it isn't necessary to share his values to appreciate his analysis.)

But another threat to continuity comes from the current prevalence of the economic mode of thought, which Simon so ably exemplifies. Once something is considered subject to cost-benefit analysis, its very existence is tacitly negotiable, and it is simply a fact that where the market prevails continuity is rare, and almost accidental when found. At best, continuity gets treated as a public good, like defense or parks, and a society can decide how much it is willing to pay for it (conservatives are those who are willing to "pay" more). Karl Polanyi, a thinker the left should not be allowed to appropriate, was outraged by that sort of calculus; he insisted that some things should be outside the market altogether —literally, beyond price. It is a measure of how things have changed since his time that so few of us can enter wholeheartedly into his protest, for all that we may admire and share the impulse behind it. Despite the appeal of the simple, static, preindustrial society described by Polanyi, Engels, and the authors of *I'll Take My Stand,* among others, we don't live in that world—perhaps no one ever did. Doubtless, calculation of cost and return has had a corrosive effect on many institutions (think only of the family), and fewer things strike us as absolute goods "beyond price." But many empirical cases have demonstrated that simply ignoring market forces is a recipe for disaster, and, as the neoconservatives have repeatedly shown, this sort of calculation is a two-edged sword. It is refreshing to see that it can be used against the wishful thinking of those who believe we can direct change however we please, as well as those of us who prefer that nothing much change at all. Simon's adversaries include both sorts of wishful thinkers, and his book is a serious and thought-provoking (if not entirely cheering) contribution to debate on an important topic.

In most policy matters there is some sober, boring, meliorative middle ground between price-is-no-object utopianism (whether of the left- or right-wing variety), on the one hand, and mindlessly going with the flow—or the jerk—of the market on the other. In the case of many raw materials, price increases demonstrably expand supply in the long run, and increasing the price of any commodity will reduce wasteful consumption. But large and abrupt price increases can play havoc with an individual household's financial planning, especially if the household is only marginally solvent. In the long run, increased oil prices may or may not prove a blessing, but only the willfully obtuse could deny that many poor families have suffered because of them. Just so, in dealing with poverty, there must be a middle ground between virtually ignoring it and attacking it wholesale in grandiose and ill-considered "wars." In *The Underclass,* Ken Auletta's major contribution—maybe his only one—is to seek that middle ground. The standard Great Society question—still echoed from time to time by Democratic Presidential aspirants—begins with the phrase, "If we can put a man on the moon . . ." If that, why not give everyone: a good job, free legal services, quality medical care, public transportation, decent housing, lifelong education, and the rest? Auletta doesn't *answer* this question so much as assume it is silly.

In the concluding chapters of *The Underclass,* Auletta rejects both the wholesale approach and the laissez-faire position (or a caricature of one) that writes off the poor as hopeless and puts its faith in bigger and better prisons. He urges a "retail" solution: small scale, limited in its aspirations, tentative, experimental, and directed to those who both need help and will make good use of it. On the way to that conclusion, Auletta presents a motley collection of poor folks—urban (mostly black and Hispanic), Appalachian white, and rural black; welfare mothers, ex-convicts, past and present drug addicts—caught up in various programs intended to help them reenter the "mainstream." To his credit, Auletta doesn't oversimplify. Some of these people *are* hopeless, in this world at least, and a few caused me to regret the closing of workhouses. Others, however, have enough grit and determination to warm Horatio Alger's heart, and only the most doctrinaire objectivist would begrudge them a hand up from the appalling circumstances in which they find themselves—circumstances made appalling, in large part, by the depredations of the hopeless ones. Identifying the—excuse the expression—deserving poor, preferably early, would save a lot of money and wasted effort. Put another way, Auletta's way, antipoverty efforts need more precise "targeting." A social safety net shouldn't become a hammock.

> "But there is more to this message than meets the eye. It contains the hidden assumption that one can exhort the American people to solve their problems only if they are kept in the dark about being victims of a deeply flawed and mismanaged social system. The truth is that it is absolutely essential for all Americans of whatever class to be informed about the systematic origins of poverty if any of us are ever really going to help ourselves."
>
> —*Psychology Today*

The Underclass is probably on the side of reason, common sense, and the angels. But that doesn't make it a good book. Auletta's attempt to paint a comprehensive picture (if that's what he is trying to do) ends up just rambling and poorly organized. Even what I take to be its major point—that there is, despite the book's title, no single "underclass" —is hardly new: anyone who has read Booth or Mayhew on the poor of Victorian London knows that. Moreover, Auletta doesn't address the most interesting political question about his or anyone else's "middle ground" solution: namely, whether a democratic society can find that middle ground and hold it.

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On Progress & Education

Richard Hoggart: *An English Temper: Essays on Education, Culture and Communications;* Oxford University Press; New York.

Michael W. Apple: *Education and Power;* Routledge & Kegan Paul; Boston.

by Gordon M. Pradl

The self-confident voices of the liberal culture would have us all believe in progress. Through their rhetorical excesses and their exclusionary stance they have tried to create the illusion that they alone know what progress is and that they have a monopoly on both the vision of the good life and the values needed to bring it about. This claim is a simple abuse of truth. True conservatives are deeply concerned with the values of life but they follow a more cautious path to bring them about.

Progress presumably relates to the future. But debates over differing notions of progress are really about the past, about those values that one locates in previous generations, as one attempts to imagine and shape a future that will satisfy our needs. A society that includes the idea of progress as part of its dynamics is not damning its previous manifestations, but merely acknowledging that work still remains to be done to improve the conditions of life for its members, thus increasing the odds that it will adequately anticipate tomorrow. Progress, in other words, need not imply an attack on the existing value structure of a society; rather, it can point to our continuing efforts to realize more widely the values that we have inherited and that have shaped our past and present achievements. Viewed in this way, change need hold no fatal contradiction for a true conservative position as long as the value center holds, as long as the material accomplishments do not destroy the spiritual basis for the original vitality of that culture.

Liberal culture refuses to acknowledge such obvious truths because it thinks it can maintain its hegemony by denying the very foundations of the society that allowed its rise in the first place. In touting progress, liberal culture's real concern is to brainwash us into thinking that because not all of our society's actions in the past have been defensible, its value structure must be at fault, and thus exposed as a sham. Consequently, it relentlessly attacks the values, standards, and institutions that have shaped America's greatness. And in this life-and-death struggle for control of the future, the social institution that, excepting the family, best embodies our regenerative capacity, is education.

If the world that we pass on to our children no longer reflects all that we hold dear, then to a large extent we will feel that our efforts have been in vain. So we construct institutions that help to insure that future generations will fundamentally perpetuate our present characteristics as a people. One of the key strategies used to insure such survival is school organization and management. How education is defined and ordered in America, which ideology shapes our knowledge, attitudes, and abilities, once they have been determined, goes a long way toward clarifying the deep structures that bind us together as a civilization.

That conservatives are in danger of losing this battle of definition and order in education should come as no surprise: what should startle us, however, is how our present plight is illuminated by various left-leaning commentators who themselves hold no truck with the liberal culture. By suspending abhorrence for their political-economic agendas we can use their eyes to see more clearly how schooling all too often fosters within students a negative vision of America's values and achievements—how individual autonomy is denigrated, dependency encouraged, and standards leveled.

In *An English Temper: Essays on Education, Culture and Communications,* the British literary critic and educator Richard Hoggart addresses a number of issues relating to standards and distribution in education. How should people behave in educational settings, both teachers and students? How do we monitor the mass media which so powerfully dictate our images and values? How should we both think of and assist the dispossessed amongst us, especially in terms of literacy and legitimacy? Although Hoggart claims identity with the left, his real values grow out of his university training, which was elitist in the best sense of that term. There lie his real loyalties, for there he learned the power of respecting and supporting the quest for individual achievement. Such a position grew inevitably out of his literary training:

> For all its looseness and lack of analytical rigor, the English tradition in literary-cultural criticism has always been concerned with making a deeply human critique. It has kept a firm focus on individuals, on what happens to people.

This concern for the individual and his nascent powers aligns Hoggart against liberal culture. He recognizes, for instance, its master strategy for anesthetizing the populace by endlessly assaulting Protestant ethics, especially in "attitudes to competitive work and to the sexual life." Throughout his essays he dramatically captures our sense of alienation and impotence in the face of our increasingly centralized and technologized social institutions. More and more we are on the outside looking in on the crucial decisions that affect our lives. And, frighteningly, we seem on the verge of even

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welcoming such dependency: "consumer societies tend to flaccidity, to leading people into 'letting *them* do it,' to handing things over increasingly to professionals." Hoggart connects the drift of our culture with education as he exposes the gap between our rhetoric and our deeds by noting: "adult education is about the responsibility of the individual *before* that of the collective."

The heart of the educational dilemma in a democratic society is determining how to balance standards with access, how to ensure that a wider distribution of the products of schooling does not lead to a leveling downward of these very products. Discriminations lost, in other words, even in the name of equality, debase the quality of life for us all. The discriminations that matter most concern educational structures that encourage agency, that promote conduct befitting the individual ownership of concepts and ideas, of imagination and creation. Such property is, of course, public, but the citizen/learner's stance toward it must be as if it were his own. In this desire to excel lies the pride of achievement behind Hoggart's use of the word *responsibility*. Individuals educated under such conditions guarantee a cultural self-renewal in which progress shares the stage with anchored values. Indeed, these forms of discrimination, or standards, are the very values that need to be projected into the future, if such a future is not to be subverted by the liberal culture with all its sly manipulations.

Hoggart sees such connections clearly; through his years of service at the university and at UNESCO he has seen firsthand the abuses of schemes catering to the "relevance" demands and whims of undisciplined students or helping the so-called disadvantaged. Concerning this latter group, Hoggart is far from sentimental:

> some of those who have reacted against the purer forms of cultural deprivation theory and have insisted on the possible richness of working-class culture are in danger of themselves falling into a new myth . . . our duty [is] not to romanticise the situations such people are in, but to help them, whilst not doing wrong to whatever may be good in their present worlds, to help them in the right ways, to—and I choose the verb deliberately—*surmount* that world.

Such talk would scandalize generations of "researchers" and bureaucrats who benefit by keeping such people in their place while dutifully proclaiming respect for their "culture." In this regard, Hoggart spends considerable time exposing those involved in community arts programs that merely confirm existing prejudices and debased standards. The funding of such projects, he maintains, inexorably reflects an attempt to homogenize us to the lowest level of response. Thwarted from striving upward, we eventually become impervious to those voices within us that urge us to refine and transform our present conditions.

Hoggart demonstrates that a properly conceived notion of literacy is probably the only means of inoculating citizens against mass leveling. It is in the best interests of liberal culture, as they have obviously divined, to pollute the world of literature and thus break down our resistance once and for all. Hoggart's sensibilities on such central issues will never be muddled and his strongly worded value assertions should be a charge to us all.

In *Education and Power,* by Michael Apple of the University of Wisconsin, the discourse differs dramatically from *An English Temper*—and therein lies a tale of the importance of primary educational socialization. Although both men acknowledge their working-class roots, Hoggart has been transformed by the living traditions of a humane university education, while Apple has bought into the abstract doctrine of Marxist social analysis. In his critique of institutional education, Apple attempts to describe

LIBERAL CULTURE

This Bad, Bad World . . .

Under an alarming title, "Gay soldier barred from show," a midwestern daily relates to us a horror story of abject injustice:

> FORT LEWIS, Wash.—The Army barred avowed homosexual soldier Perry Watkins from dressing as a woman at a Fort Lewis recreation center show and dance. In the routine, Watkins, 34, of Joplin, Mo., would have done a take-off of comedian Carol Burnett's impersonation of a cleaning woman.

We always believed the Army to be an institution of grueling discomfort that one joined in spite of harsh deprivations—for reasons of patriotism, feelings of duty, or mercenary advantage. We never suspected that it could be an environment full of blissful transports and ecstatic pleasures. Were we wrong? □

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not only how schools reproduce existing socioeconomic arrangements, but also how their impact on students and teachers always threatens to unsettle these traditional arrangements. Typically, Apple assumes the following posture toward his subject:

> one fundamental latent social role of the school is 'deviance amplification.' That is, the school *naturally generates* certain kinds of deviance. This process of natural generation is intimately related to the complex place schools have in the economic and cultural reproduction of class relations—on the one hand to the school's function as an ideological state apparatus and through this in producing agents (with the appropriate dispositions and values) to fill the needs of the social division of labor in society, and on the other hand to the place of educational institutions in producing the particular kinds of knowledge forms required in an unequal society.

In such a world evil is easily located: class division, profits, inequality, exploitation. Apple's rhetoric is tiresome and misdirected. He will remain unconvinced that there is nothing inherently wrong with the fact that technological knowledge benefits corporate concerns or that the rationalization of production has meant a better life for all. He will forever be shocked that "In offices, word-processing technology is employed to reduce labor costs and deskill woman workers. Thus, management attempts to control both the pace of the work and the skills required, to increase more effectively their profit margins or productivity." Productivity and profit margins presumably have nothing to do with the good life, and word-processing will supposedly further enslave us.

Yet part of his educational analysis can be used to expose the dynamics of liberal culture's authoritarian invasion of the schools. "Deviance amplification" provides appropriate jargon with which to start. Schools are supposed to equip students with the skills, the initiative, and the discipline to compete successfully in the marketplace. What gets lost in the process, however, is human agency. Perhaps some mistaken notion is operating which equates submission and obedience with the control of production-line workers, or perhaps it has been forgotten that the goal of any system is *self*-discipline. Not allowed to buy into the system because their powers of agency are not legitimized, vast numbers of citizens descend into a limbo world which increasingly strikes out against the dominant culture in a variety of forms—from labor featherbedding to scrawling graffiti on public monuments.

Apple claims that "the norms that guide school life" are being rejected by many students. Why aren't these norms working? Certainly at fault is the educational system's neglect of the student's ability to exercise her own intentions. Such self-control has nothing to do with the whining self-indulgence encouraged by liberal culture. Quite simply you don't indoctrinate the values of freedom; you have people live them. Further, you don't separate individual autonomy from the social fabric.

Yet, a number of current curriculum "innovations" are attempting to do just that:

> With the increasing employment of prepackaged curricular systems as the basic curricular form, virtually no interaction between teachers is required. If nearly everything is rationalized and specified before execution, then contact among teachers about actual curricular matters is minimized.

Rows of children in front of their individual learning consoles is hardly a reassuring vision of the future. Again the figure *agency* is lost without the ground of a social network of standards which can be constantly tested. Beating the machine is finally just a sterile achievement. Indeed, the very values of the free market are undercut once all the "prepackaged curricular material" is placed on automatic pilot. For if this comes to pass (as is already happening), it will be equivalent to placing ourselves under the domination of a system which pretends to know in advance what will be the outcome of our experiments and our risks. On the day that initiative is surrendered, America will be no longer.

Apple may be using the wrong lens, but both he and Hoggart prod us to think seriously about how far we have bought into the liberal culture's program for progress. For as long as we fail to support agency and standards, schools will remain perfectly content to turn out the full line of deviance liberal culture demands. □

In the Mail

The Virginia Papers on the Presidency, Volume X **edited by Kenneth W. Thompson; University Press of America; Washington, DC.** Abe Fortas, Dean Rusk, Eugene McCarthy, and others provide tips on how better to administrate in an unwieldy world.

Portraits of American Presidents, Volume I: The Roosevelt Presidency: Four Intimate Perspectives of FDR **edited by Kenneth W. Thompson; University Press of America; Washington, DC.** FDR is the first in the series; LBJ will be next. What happened to G.W., J.A., T.J., and the others without middle initials?

Vietnam: Three Battles **by S.L.A. Marshall; DaCapo Press; New York.** In its first life, this was known as *Fields of Bamboo* (1971). The new title is more accurate: text, field sketches, and photos concerning three battles. The flora remain the same.

Word City **by Marvin Morrison; Pilot Light; Stone Mountain, GA.** Anyone with spelling difficulties who can figure out how to use this dictionary should skip English and immediately take up advanced algebra.

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Soap Opera & Matters of Plumbing

Gwyneth Cravens: *Love and Work;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

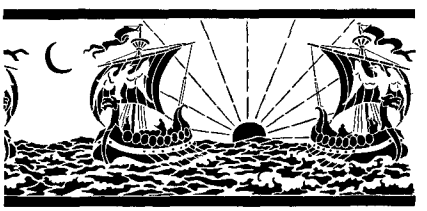
Allen Hannay: *Love and Other Natural Disasters;* Atlantic-Little, Brown; Boston.

by Keith Bower

Charles Lamb once said that there were certain places and certain times for reading particular books. Although one might take Izaak Walton fishing, the only reading one is likely to accomplish would be the fine print on the fishing license. And however many miles one might lug Montaigne's essays, it's doubtful one would find the grassy slope in the Guyenne that is supposed to be perfect for him. The books by Cravens and Hannay have a natural setting, the perfect aerie: atop the toilet tank.

Ladies first: *Love and Work* is a novel of manners set among the unmannerly. Ms. Cravens seems to have put more work into this socially meaningful, light comedy than either her characters or her subject deserve. An unemployed woman finds work assisting a young, haggard, has-been Yalie who edits a dull executive newsletter for an impersonal corporation. Love ensues, and it struggles beneath the burden of deadlines. Another woman and the Yalie finally leave to "work" on their relationship. The previously unemployed woman is thus out of work—and out of the picture. Even a TV sitcom is better.

Yet Cravens is adept, as women sometimes are, at exploiting the manners of her day, and the novel escapes that dread modern disease of becoming a fiction for the sake of introducing conversations. There are few serious flaws in her narrative, although she changes the pacing with ridiculous leaps in chronology and tries to sew up loose threads long after the conclusion of the book becomes apparent. Neither does she err by being a female chauvinist: the female characters are just as cardboard as the male ones. Ms. Cravens's title subject gave her a knife with which she might have excised the warts of the 1970's. Instead, she uses it only to cut the ends of her needlepoint, and she needles not enough for a satirist.



The reader is spared flagrant sexual politics and harridans' harangues; Gwyneth Cravens is on the side of propriety. She seems to want to smite the New York yokels with an elegant toss of the pen, the way a teenage girl tosses her head with a strained laugh when the crowd has gotten a little too obstreperous. But she hasn't risen above peer pressure yet: after all, these types publish books, and girls from the hinterlands had better be famous first before they try to be Phyllis McGinley, to say nothing of George Eliot. One recalls Anthony Trollope, and the way he chided his characters without becoming moralistic. But these cosmopolitan cretins need moralization, and there doesn't appear to be anyone but Saul Bellow and Walker Percy to take that on yet.

Certainly not Allen Hannay. *Love and Other Natural Disasters* is of the Texas school—not Larry McMurty and Edward Abbey and Larry King—a literary set, like members of the Lone Star jazz circle that produces a wailing, gutbucket sound that goes on for too many choruses, often dribbling off into contrived clichés with a plaintive sweetness akin to sappiness. This is "Lockjaw" Davis transposed into print. Striving for originality, Hannay inserts all the proper "wild" ingredients found in the modern novel of frivolity. The hero is a senior in high school who falls head over cowboy boots for his latest date's mother. How original. Thirty-five and divorced, the woman is running to seed fast and needs something new: with the young man, she takes up jogging and good, old-fashioned, scandalous sex. They run through the rice fields at night and make love on the dike behind the drive-in. The first ten minutes of *Midnight Cowboy* covered this aspect of American culture well enough for posterity.

Of the two books, Hannay's takes love the more seriously. Despite all the locker-room bawdiness, he at least tries to make some sense out of the chaos of the modern notion of sexual love. Hannay attempts to tell a story that leads somewhere, even if it only arrives at the improbable uniting of two lustful animals in a doomed effort to raise their illegitimate child someplace in California where the neighbors don't know. Cravens leaves us stranded in a spiritless place—Central Park—with two hopeless solipsists craving the ultimate orgasm: death.

> "I haven't had as much fun reading in a long time."
>
> —one Peter Gorner
> *Chicago Tribune*

Both books could serve as an emblem for the America the publishing industry is bequeathing to our kids: a sterile, dull, inhuman patch of prairie, left to its own rot by people who only had time to string up a few neon signs, make a few bucks, and get in each others' genes for the night. □

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Doubts Far Beyond Reason

Willard Gaylin: *The Killing of Bonnie Garland: A Question of Justice;* Simon & Schuster; New York.

by Edward N. Peters

In the early hours of the morning of July 7, 1977, Richard Herrin, a no-account graduate student, repeatedly crushed a hammer into the head of his 20-year-old girl friend, Bonnie Garland, as she lay sleeping in her parents' home. Thinking she was dead ("Her head split open like a watermelon," Herrin later told police), Herrin fled in the Garlands' automobile, leaving a paralyzed and semiconscious Bonnie, choking on her own blood, to lie staring at the ceiling—from which investigators later removed pieces of her brain—for over six hours. Herrin, meanwhile, drove around sleeping Scarsdale trying to think of ways to kill himself, though, interestingly, talking himself out of each opportunity as it occurred. Finally, around daybreak, the half-naked attacker presented himself at the local Catholic church and told a priest how he had spent the previous night. Just seconds after telling officers that her daughter was sleeping upstairs, Mrs. Garland's scream shattered the morning stillness as she discovered Bonnie awash in a pool of blood. Bonnie died that evening; two emergency operations were unable to control the devastation wreaked upon her young person.

Herrin the woman-slayer was charged with murder in what should have been an open-and-shut case. A jury of his peers brought back a verdict of guilty—not of murder, but of the significantly lesser offense of manslaughter. Where, asks Willard Gaylin; where, asks Bonnie's parents; where, asks a sizable portion of thinking society, is justice?

There comes to mind no other study which, looking only at a single criminal trial, more clearly identifies the ignorance, misinformation, and outright deceit that characterizes the modern insanity defense ploy. Even if Gaylin, a doctor of psychiatry, stumbles over some of the convolutions of legal argumentation, his overall critique of psychiatric evidence in the criminal trial is excellent. States Gaylin:

> Criminal activity is the bête noire of the modern psychiatrist. It is the kind of human behavior about which he is most ignorant, and perversely, about which he is called to give the most certain opinions—in testimony under oath. The conditions that bind the relationship of psychiatry and the law today are such that confusion and contradiction are guaranteed.

Yet when Gaylin turns his sights on the liberal Catholic community at Yale University—which sprang with a nauseatingly Pavlovian response to Herrin's defense—his vision becomes decidedly foggy.

One must not be too hard on Gaylin. He and his generation of Americans have lived through a quarter-century of Berrigan blood-splashers, Kane mutinies, and liberated bodies enslaved by passion, all in the name of liberal Catholic renewal. They have borne with "personally opposed, but . . ." bishops; slept through homilists spewing such intellectual persiflage as: "Looked at superficially, Christianity would appear to be a very external religion"; and wondered in their hearts what a "failure to re-enforce each other" could possibly mean. But the conservative renewal in America will be for naught if it does not bring with it a capacity for critical thinking. Tedious at times, frequently fruitless, and difficult always, yet the responsible commentator on Western culture must bring to bear on his subject that crucial discernment of principles and practice. Gaylin's cutting commentary about the Yale Catholic community, fitting target though it may be, lacks this identification of principles vis-à-vis practice, thus his analysis suffers.

The religious who answered criticism of their support for Herrin with "hate the sin and love the sinner" were, as a matter of principle, correct. But the *prudence* of raising $30,000 to buy Herrin an attorney as a means of showing that love is highly suspect. Gaylin suggests instead that we "hate the sin and punish the sinner." He has recognized—psychologically and morally—that to punish the sinner *is* to love the sinner, a point the Yalies should have at least considered. But to assert, as does Gaylin, that *every* sinner should be punished, is error.

Nor is it possible to flatly disallow the right of the Catholic community, or any community, to come to the aid of an indicted individual. But those—and not just liberal Catholic clergy—who seize upon the isolated criminal case as a vehi-

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In the Mail

Ten Presidents and the Press **edited by Kenneth W. Thompson; University Press of America; Washington, DC.** Certain vexations just won't go away.

Facing Reality: From World Federalism to the CIA **by Cord Meyer; University Press of America; Washington, DC.** The final paragraph, which posits the success of democratic reform in the Soviet Union and an end to forced communist rule in Eastern Europe, belies the title.

American Political Rhetoric: A Reader **edited by Peter Augustine Lawler; University Press of America; Washington, DC.** Irrefutable proof that the Moderns (e.g., Reagan's 1982 State of the Union Message) have nothing over the Ancients (e.g., *The Federalist Papers).*

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cle for their personal criticism of the system should be called to task. Evidence of such ulterior motives abound in the Garland case. Consider the example of Sister Ramona, the self-disavowed architect of Herrin's public support, interviewed in her apartment. The text is full of what *she* wanted Herrin to feel, how *she* wanted Herrin to look, or how hurt *she* was when one of her compatriot priests left the effort to get married. Gaylin's failure to comment on the marriage of the priest, which was so clearly symptomatic of the aberrancy of the Yale Catholic leadership, strongly suggests his lack of understanding of the turmoil gripping the Catholic Church in America after a generation of liberal meddlers: the events surrounding the trial of Bonnie Garland's killer are but a tiny example of that chaos.

> "Extracts from the interviews and the letters leave an indelible impression of a winning young man. . . . Hence they virtually compel us to adopt some sort of psychiatric understanding of his act, and, as we know from Madame de Staël, to understand is to forgive."
>
> —**Paul Robinson**
> *The New Republic*

Just as the conduct of numerous religious people involved with the case was, finally, an error in practice, Herrin's defense rested, basically, on errors of legal principle. Gaylin persuasively demonstrates that nearly every piece of evidence introduced by the defense to show Herrin's "extreme emotional disturbance" could have been easily attributed to a responsible individual. The courts must be brought to face reality: unless confronted by an individual who acts in an incomprehensibly bizarre fashion, the defense simply cannot *prove* the accused's insanity, at least not as long as anything more than lip service is given to a "beyond a reasonable doubt" or even "clear and convincing evidence" standard of proof at a trial. But therein lies the error of legal principle: The burden is *not* upon the defense to prove the accused's insanity; it is, rather, with little more than a pro forma claim by the defense of insanity, upon the *prosecution* to prove the accused's sanity. Thus, American judiciary seeks to add the presumption of insanity to the presumption of innocence.

To be sure, both presumed innocence and insanity have a proper role to play in legal justice. The fact remains that officers of the state do occasionally accuse persons of crimes they did not commit, and some people really are insane. Both presumptions, and especially the latter, draw heavily from a post-Enlightenment reluctance to assign personal guilt to a transgressor. This, in turn, springs from a refusal to acknowledge the existence of a free will, and hence the abdication of any responsibility to control the will or account for its use.

At his trial, Herrin was asked whether, when he entered—hammer in hand—the room where Bonnie lay sleeping, he intended to kill her. "Yes," he answered. "No," answered the jury when asked to return a verdict of guilty of murder. "Where," asks Gaylin, between these two roundly opposed statements, "is justice?" Questions of justice will always involve questions of principle and practice. Keeping these two guides in mind is an excellent way to begin the ancient search. □

The Corporation: Culture or Subculture

Terrence E. Deal and Allan A. Kennedy: *Corporate Cultures: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life;* Addison-Wesley; Reading, MA.

by Thomas L. Ashton

Henry James said that American businessmen considered culture the concern of "women, foreigners and other impractical people." Today George Will writes that "the audience for Masterpiece Theater is unlikely to be seduced into affection for Mobil." Ultimately, both remarks mean the same thing. The prevailing voices continue to claim that people who run corporations are either boring technocrats or soulless philistines. The contrast of commerce and culture—when the one means only profit maximization and the other supposedly means aesthetic purity—makes out of business people something other than humans. Neither ideal nor ideally beautiful, they can't be real.

Two congruent fallacies promote the dehumanization of corporate man. The first is that MBA program graduates must have been outside of culture from the start, or that they suffered a "value lobotomy" that neutralized their humanness. The second is that culture has no effect on the uncultured—thus the cultureless corporate manager and his workplace, a chamber of white sound, robot typewriters, and always ruthless competition. The corporation is somehow far more military than the Army as softened by M*A*S*H. Television viewers know the executive as the villain of soap operas or the buffoon of the sitcoms. His stereotype isn't real because he isn't real. But one must remember that James was the perpetuator of a tradition which has kept work and working out of the novel since Dickens. Dickens's only followers have been Dreiser, Dos Passos, and that G.E. employee, Kurt Vonnegut. People in the great novel live on essentially unearned income. Paradoxically, they are more real than the people who work. Life and work are at odds, and

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their partition is increasingly understood as a necessity in a world of business conglomerates. Therefore there can be no culture in work and workplace, no matter what Studs Terkel and Daniel Yankelovich find, each in his own way.

Enter Deal and Kennedy's *Corporate Cultures,* which does restore culture to the world of work—but it turns out to be as culture-bound as *Babbitt.* By simplifying corporate culture to human problems presented at the soap-opera level, the authors deny a human reality to the world of business organizations. A convention delegate once told Joan Didion that the Junior Chamber of Commerce had changed his life because "it saved my marriage and it built my business." The executives of *Corporate Cultures* come off no better.

The idea of a corporate culture goes at least as far back as Robert Roy's *The Cultures of Management* (1970); what Deal and Kennedy mean by the term can be found in Schwartz and Davis on "Matching Corporate Culture and Business Strategy" in a 1981 number of *Organizational Dynamics.* The problem with their approach is that culture seen in isolation is not culture. The people who choose to live through their work in the modern corporation experience as much cultural pressure from without as from within. Even if they have been raised on a steady diet of Scrooge McDuck and Monopoly, many are worried about what Daniel Bell called the cultural contradictions of capitalism. The corporate world is not a culture, but a subculture. Those familiar with the work of Michael Maccoby on industrial anthropology, which is conspicuous by its absence in *Corporate Cultures,* understand just how much excessive behavior reflects the tension between the two.

Maccoby, in *The Gamesman* and more recently in *The Leader,* can discuss corporate culture with authenticity and a larger social vision. Beginning with a still-quoted classic, Douglas McGregor's *The Human Side of Enterprise* (1960), Maccoby finds unchallenged its caveat: participation in the workplace means greater profit. Our reluctance to work in corporations is really a reluctance to recognize that we *do* work in them more often than not. But without participation work is a curse and the corporation is to blame. Yet Maccoby found that managers, regardless of earned respect, are not quite trusted when they push hard for social concern and humanization. But the consequences of the fact that corporations today organize more human energy of higher intellectual quality than any other American institutions did not escape Maccoby. The hope that technology designed by both social and economic criteria may generate loyalty, concern, and productivity lives on in the corporate culture. "A new type of man," concludes Maccoby, "is taking over the leadership of the most technically advanced companies in America. . . . more cooperative and less hardened than the autocratic empire builder and less dependent than the organizaton man, he is more detached and emotionally inaccessible than either. And he is troubled by it: the new industrial leader can recognize that his work develops his head but not his heart."

"The life of the mind in the firm," wrote Neil Chamberlain, "is hobbled and its vision is blinkered by the constraint to which the business institution is subject within the larger social system. The firm's specialized role is perhaps the greatest limitation on the role of the individual within it." This point cannot be overlooked by those wishing to write about corporate culture. The relation of individual and firm replicates the rela-

LIBERAL CULTURE

When Did He Stop Beating His Wife?

Certainly one of the most famous profiles in the history of television is the ample one of the late Alfred Hitchcock. Hitchcock was, throughout his life, on the chunky side. *Parade* magazine, the organ of reading illiterates, has divined *why* Hitch was portly:

> Despite a long marriage with all the exterior trappings of success, Hitchcock lived a life of sexual frustration. . . . Whenever he lost off-set control of an actress whose life he sought to dominate—as with Bergman, Miles and Hedren, the latter two of whom he had under personal contract—he'd overeat to compensate for his frustration.

That Hitchcock employed beautiful actresses no one can deny. That Hitchcock was domineering on the sets with actresses—as well as actors, cameramen, etc.—is well known. That Hitchcock had a large girth is evident. How *Parade* knows the *real* story behind the relationship between Alfred and Alma Hitchcock is never made clear, though that is probably of little interest to the readers of

"Personality Parade." If its suggestions about the link between sexual undernourishment and alimentary excess were correct, the planet would flip out of orbit under the weight of its population. □

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tion of business and society. How we think about business governs how the corporation views itself and how the corporate person understands his function. The first constraint Chamberlain has in mind is the profit/efficiency test commonly known as "the bottom line." But his argument is equally true of the socialist approach which offers no greater hope of intellectual freedom for those within the frame of modern economic organization. Chamberlain's second constraint—specialization—may be ameliorated by the values of craftsmanship. But the profit motive implies that corporate culture is subject to the cultural definition of profit. The hope is that "if we can broaden the standards by which we judge the activity [of giant corporations], if we can free them from a test of efficiency more relevant to the past than the present, we can invigorate the intellectual climate within which the specialized role of employees is performed." This would mean falling out of love with systems analysis, in which parts are valued for their contribution to the efficiency of the whole, in favor of a system whose social values provide discretion and purpose to the parts themselves. To rise above the bottom line means to broaden it by means of cultural redefinition. The purpose of the market changes with culture. Drucker and Floyd Matson have long since reported the death of the organic cash register known as rational economic man. Business makes money, but it is a commonplace that people in business have to earn more than money. Finally, the issue of corporate culture is the issue of autonomy in work, the question of work made meaningful.

Corporate Cultures has little to offer the troubled new business leader. "The ultimate lesson, of course," write the authors, "is that managers need to be fully aware of the ritualistic element of their own culture and not allow themselves to be captured by the magic of what they do day to day." Such advice may keep the manager's eyes raised, but its blindness to economic, political, and psychological reality is apparent in the rationale: "A strong culture enables people to feel better about what they do, so they are more likely to work harder." Everywhere, naive specifics confirm that *Corporate Cultures* is another simplistic organizational development handbook masquerading as cultural analysis. "Of course," write Deal and Kennedy, "corporate life is never quite as simple and pat as that," but they seem fully convinced that it is. This conviction ultimately tells us: "A company's culture is like a security blanket for its people. It tells them what to do and reassures them that if they do it they will not be just accepted by the people around them, but also rewarded." The blanket-bearing manager attuned to corporate culture turns out to be none other than the organization man. "The key action," as the final prescription goes, such a manager "must try is to tailor his response to the norms of the culture" of the company.

The arguments in *Corporate Cultures* are more than outdated; they are dangerously nostalgic. This makes them both fashionable and at cross purposes. Apparently "the warm, humane managers promoted by business publications today" are the wrong kind of security blanket. "The point is this," say Deal and Kennedy in the same breath, "modern managers who try to be humane may at the same time undermine the values upon which the culture of the institution rests. Modern heroes need to be hard and 'insensitive' to keep a company consistent with its goals and vision—the very elements that made it strong in the first place." How little this understands of the relationship of culture and subculture, and how much it wants to be in step, are clear when the whip appears: "The real problem with managers today is that they are not aggressive enough in trying to influence the behavior around them. . . . In today's self-conscious world, where things are supposed to be 'laid-back' and 'easy going,' few managers have the conviction to set any standards for behavior. As a result, the cultures of today's companies ebb and flow with the changing fads of society as a whole." This puts the cart before the horse and then whips a dead cart. The myth of the laid-back corporate leader was propounded by organizational consultants in the 70's and is now attacked by the same consultants in the 80's. Business has yet to give it more than lip service.

Deal and Kennedy should know as much, for the leader who exemplifies the past they can't return to turns out to be the creator of IBM. In their words: "Thomas Watson himself confessed to learning leadership under NCR's Patterson, whom he described as 'an amalgam of St. Paul, Poor Richard, and Adolf Hitler.'" Powerful leaders like Watson "put the business in their heart and thus crowd out softer sentiments. It's a lesson today's managers should learn as an antidote to the hype on business humaneness." But then: "We are not arguing for a return to authoritarianism. Rather we believe that managers have a strong potential for positive influence if they will just exercise it." This qualification is exposed in Deal and Kennedy's final choice of strong culture *corporations:* McDonald's, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Roman Catholic Church. Just who is who when it comes to St. Paul, Franklin, and Hitler is not clarified.

In *Democracy in America,* Tocqueville asked: "How does it happen, then, that the Americans sail their vessels at a cheaper rate than ours?" His answer: "I am of the opinion that the true cause of their superiority must not be sought for in physical advantages, but that it is wholly attributable to moral and intellectual qualities." The very same question is asked in Detroit today, but no one today has Tocqueville's answer. Today, dysfunction prevents our knowing this answer, that and the feeling that we must know more because we have more. That we have more is good. The self-actualization that will again shape a wholeness of belief and reintegrate commerce and culture is sparked not by need but by security and trust. □

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Natural Dominion

William Tucker: *Progress and Privilege: America in the Age of Environmentalism;* Anchor Press/Doubleday; New York.

***Thoreau in the Mountains: Writings by Henry David Thoreau;* Commentary by William Howarth; Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York.**

by Thomas Fleming

The most basic text on environmentalism is in Genesis: "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." The expansion of man's power to subdue the earth has, in recent years, caused a scrutiny focusing upon the use he has made of his dominion. An increasing number of Americans —and Europeans—are coming to regard technology and its fruits as inherently evil and destructive. Such a reaction to technology is not new in the world. There have always been those who rebelled against the artificial extension of man's grip on the natural world. One Taoist sage expressed contempt for a device as simple as the sweep used to raise water from a well because with it man is made servant to the machine. In the early days of the Industrial Revolution, skilled craftsmen expressed their opinion of the newly mechanized textile industry by setting fire to the equipment.

Whatever their motives, the Luddite frame-breakers represented the age-old resentment of simple conservative folk against the progressive middle and upper classes. The modern environmentalists are exactly the opposite. They are a manifestation of an equally old social force: an entrenched aristocracy struggling to maintain its position. In *Progress and Privilege,* William Tucker takes a look at some of the political implications of environmentalism. His book is sure to outrage the bird-watching and backpacking elite who make up the Sierra Club. In *their* view of the matter, concern for the environment is a question of higher values, which the laboring classes cannot be expected to share. Unfortunately, as Tucker has the bad taste to point out, this is one rich man's hobby—like fox hunting in old England—which the not-so-rich are compelled to support. The cost of environmental protection—bureaucratically imposed limits to growth—are not paid for by those who have arrived (not even by the *arrivistes*) but by upwardly mobile blue-collar and white-collar workers. In this class struggle, environmental protection is synonymous with gentility:

> The idea of looking on material progress and economic security as an irrelevant and vulgar nuisance cannot be picked up over night. The old saying was that it took three generations to make a gentleman, and I have the distinct impression that it now takes at least two generations to make an environmentalist.

Tucker profitably compares environmentalists with previous avatars of political snobbery: abolition, Civil Service reform, and the Progressive movement. All their proponents professed the highest imaginable ideals, while at the same time regarding ordinary working people—and their material needs—with contempt.

Tucker is certainly right about the composition of the movement: the remnant of desiccated gentility, threatened *arrivistes,* arrogant and self-assuming professionals. Unquestionably such people constitute the American social elite—whether they (or any class of Americans) are an aristocracy is another matter. But a social elite—aristocracy, if you will—cannot be condemned out of hand for discharging its duties. One of the justifications for aristocracy used to be that it was freed from the squalid material constraints which prevent the rest of us from pursuing higher goals, aesthetic as well as social, moral as well as political. Aristocracies, almost by definition, practice inaccessible virtues. What Chivalry was in the later Middle Ages, and Art in the Victorian era, Nature is today. Like Art, a devotion to Nature is a surrogate religion —the very rich have always had trouble looking beyond the here and now. But we really must give them their due—as Tucker does not. They no longer commission great works of art (art is dead) or set the standards for polite society (society is dead). However, they do propose to preserve an important aesthetic resource —the not-quite-inexhaustible treasure of woods, lakes, and rivers.

Most people profess some sort of affection for "the great outdoors," but—according to environmentalists—not all forms of outdoor recreation are equal. These snobs wish to enjoy a wilderness unspoiled by man. Their motto is "leave no footprints." They drive in fuel-efficient automobiles to a remote parking lot and carry their 50 pounds of nitrogen-packed trail food for at least five miles before setting up their well-nigh invisible camps. They are, of course, even more dependent on technology than the laboring classes who see no reason why the woods should be so hard to get to. To simple vacationers—many of whom are only one generation off the farm—getting away from it all usually means driving in an RV to a campsite with full facilities. After unpacking the TV, stereo, and video games, the family is ready to explore the wilderness—on their trail bikes.

Tucker argues strongly for the old multiple-use doctrine. He insists that the conflict between off-road vehicles and hikers, power boats and canoes, requires a compromise. It is only, he suggests, a

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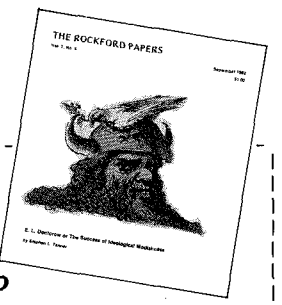

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question of relative values, "different tastes in recreation." But trail-bikers and bird-watchers can *not* peacefully coexist. Asking a woodsman to tolerate off-road vehicles is like asking the audience at a Mozart concert to endure an assembly of Walkman radios playing soul music. We have a country full of noise, of people, and of the things made by people. It does not seem like too much to ask that parks and wilderness areas be free of the everyday. Even back in the 1940's, Aldo Leopold was complaining that woodcraft had become the "art of using gadgets." Wilderness, so Leopold thought, was prized for "the feeling of isolation in nature" which it gives. If Leopold thought the desire for isolation was universal, he was mistaken. Many people, upon finding themselves alone in the woods, share the horror of Philoctetes, who felt himself a "friendless, citiless corpse among the living," or of poor Ben Gunn, who hadn't "spoke with a Christian these three years." Indeed, the Chinese are said to regard the tale of Robinson Crusoe with particular horror, a horror common to most preindustrial peoples.

Tucker does not attempt to understand this obsession of modern man to get away from it all. To the extent that he penetrates the environmentalist mindset, it is with the help of Irving Babbitt's *Rousseau and Romanticism,* but Tucker fails to distinguish between the all-too-false masks of primitivism assumed by romantics and environmentalists alike and what Babbitt called "one of man's deepest needs . . . for genuine communication, for a genuine escape, that is, from his ordinary self."

The American godfather of romantic environmentalism was Henry David Thoreau, who gave the movement its most compelling slogan, "In wilderness is the preservation of the world." Tucker is *very* careful not to attack Thoreau, although he does confess that he is sick of hearing him quoted. Thoreau actually does illustrate many of the paradoxes of environmentalism: the political idealist who gave his support to terrorists (John Brown); a man who got away from it all at Walden Pond but managed to go home for dinner on a regular basis; the archetypal American who fell in love with Oriental "philosophy." Like the other New England literati—and the modern environmentalists—Thoreau was more than a little cracked: his love of nature was also coupled with contempt for man. Unlike the other Transcendentalists, Thoreau's hatred of humanity did not take the form of utopian politics. Because he chose to write about the things he actually knew something about —the woods, the rivers, and the mountains—Thoreau's books are still read outside the classroom. In *Thoreau and the Mountains,* William Howarth, the editor of the definitive text of Thoreau, gives the casual reader a glimpse into the makings of Thoreau, whose writings on mountains span all the periods of his creative activity. The book's main purpose is to provide sentimental hikers with a tour guide of Thoreau's mountain excursions. Howarth cannot be complimented too highly for his scrupulous commentary, which all too often contains references to the depredations caused by the tourist industry.

A sort of theme emerges in these writings: Thoreau's progress from a romantic enthusiast to a real naturalist. The early accounts are full of carefully dressed poetic references, stock eloquence, and puerile philsophizing. Eventually, Thoreau's obsession with mere nature was so strong that in his later writings the reader is overwhelmed by careful, though not always entertaining, observations on geology, flora, and fauna. The most amusing parts of Howarth's collection pit the idealist Thoreau against real people whom he rarely understands. In 1844, on his ascent of Greylock in Massachusetts, Thoreau spent the night in the home of one Mr. Rice, a rough-hewn farmer. The poor philosopher opened—by way of compliment—with an observation on the wildness of the scenery. The offended farmer took so much umbrage at the backhanded flattery that by the end of the evening he was claiming that his farm (under the shadow of the mountain) had an hour more daylight than elsewhere.

It would take a greater social critic than Tucker to tell us why artists and aristocrats alike have been driven further and further away from ordinary life. There really is nothing quite like the romantic yearning for Nature in earlier civilizations—there is not even a word for it in Greek or Latin. Tucker's ad hominem argument against environmentalists—witty and accurate, though it is—does not begin to refute their basic concern: that man's power over nature has reached the point where it has become a menace, not just to other species, but to man himself, body *and* soul.

Tucker's myopia is politically induced. Even though he has, on occasion, written for *National Review,* he makes it plain that he is not in any sense conser-

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vative. It is a term he reserves for abusing environmentalists and other obstacles to growth. Ecology, for example, was originally a very good thing until it was transmuted into a "very conservative social doctrine." To find out about the enemy, Tucker had recourse to Rossiter's *Conservatism in America*—as if it were some rare exotic social movement in New Guinea. To illustrate his basic point, that environmentalist = aristocrat, he picks on *I'll Take My Stand,* the 1928 manifesto of the Southern Agrarians. It never occurs to Tucker that despite their failure, Ransom, Davidson, Lytle, and the others might have been right: that life, cut adrift from family and the land, is mere existence, not life as it has been known by our species throughout its experience.

Tucker's running jest, that radical environmentalists are real conservatives —that Barry Commoner is more reactionary than Barry Goldwater—is truer and deeper than he realizes. The conservative instinct cannot be chloroformed, transfixed, and labeled Tory, Federalist, or Republican. It is the basic sense that a man should pass on to his children a patrimony no less rich than he received from his father. It is more than resistance to change. It is the desire to hand down unimpaired the legacy of previous generations—the laws, privileges, institutions, the land itself. It is no accident of etymology that conservation and conservative start with the same letters. They both reflect the same instinct.

This biblical notion of responsible dominion over our inheritance is what Rene Dubos has called stewardship. There is a place in Tucker's scheme of things for a loyal opposition of conservative "stewards," but in the end he tars all environmentalists with the same brush: hostility to progress. Since, in Tucker's eyes, technological progress only means cures for cancer, increased food production, and a better life for all, there can be no excuse for standing in the way of mankind's destined happiness. Even resistance to genetic engineering comes only from the "anti-technological fringe of the movement," which—Tucker claims—is on the verge of conspiring with "right-wing fundamentalism." We are supposed to imagine clandestine meetings between Barry Commoner and Jerry Falwell, a merger between the Sierra Club and the Moral Majority.

Tucker cannot be as naive as he pretends. He is surely aware of the bizarre fantasies that trouble the sleep of social planners: a world free of vice, deformity, and average intelligence; special races to be bred for conditions on Antarctica or other planets. B.F. Skinner, the archetype of the mad scientist, has written confidently of nature's mistakes which "need to be put right by explicit design" and has added selective breeding and tinkering with the genetic code to his inventory of behavioral-control mechanisms.

It was not long after World War II that C.S. Lewis wrote down his thoughts on *The Abolition of Man*, that "many a mild-eyed scientist in pince-nez . . . means in the long run just the same as the Nazi rulers of Germany. Traditional values are to be 'debunked' and mankind cut into some fresh shape at the will . . . of some few lucky people in one lucky generation which has learned how to do it." Snail darters, wilderness areas, and virus-infected bacteria seem like such small things to stand in the way of unlimited growth and progress. Perhaps that is why so many American conservatives seem oblivious to their implications. It is for that reason that conservation—the most conservative of causes—has fallen into the hands of the people whom Tucker has so accurately described.

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COMMENDABLES

Beyond the Barbed-Wire Barrier

David Dary: ***Cowboy Culture: A Saga of Five Centuries;*** Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

The activities that took place on July 4, 1976, show that Americans, generally, are proud of their heritage. The fact that almost every elementary school child knows the mnemonic line "In fourteen hundred and ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue" indicates that certain aspects of the past are not to be forgotten. One anniversary that should be celebrated with fireworks, songs, and more—and which probably won't be marked except in isolated cases—will occur on January 2, 1994. According to David Dary, in his comprehensive *Cowboy Culture,* 500 years before that date Columbus "set anchor off the north coast of Hispaniola near present Cape Haitien, Haiti . . . and unloaded twenty-four stallions, ten mares, and an unknown number of cattle. They were the first such creatures in the Western Hemisphere." That has consequences far beyond matters of animal husbandry. It ultimately led to something more inherently American than George Washington and the cherry tree, Ben Franklin and his kite, or even apple pie: the cowboy.

Since the rise of the cowboy in the first half of the 19th century, Americans, especially those in cities, many of whom think of cows in terms of that daisy-ringed creature and who have only ridden on a horse tethered on a ring in a public park, identify with the Wild West. (This is no late-20th-century phenomenon: Dary includes two photos from the 1880's, one of which is captioned: "Three Dodge City businessmen dressed as cowboys to have their pictures taken, apparently to impress some Eastern friends.") Think only of the movies to get a perception of America's self-image, one well known around the world: John Ford, William Wyler, Howard Hawks . . . John Wayne, Gary Cooper, Henry Fonda . . . *High Noon, Shane, Gunfight at the OK Corral.* Even though everybody knows that cowboys weren't the way they are in the classic movies and that the invention of the barbed-wire fence (in 1873 in midwest Illinois, not Wild West Texas) put an end to him, the cowboy transcends such puny boundaries in the American imagination. David Dary's factual account enhances the image. □

Read This to Hear Me Speak

Walter J. Ong: ***Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word;*** Methuen; New York.

When the Church's influence on the arts comes up, there is often a tendency immediately to bring up zealots like Girolamo Savonarola or the Index of Forbidden Books. Crudely added fig leaves on frescos and burned or otherwise withheld books are cited as the Church's contribution to culture. More laudable—and representative—aspects are, with few exceptions, glossed over or depreciated. Consider literature. St. Augustine's *Confessions* can be discussed seriously in terms of epistemology; the sprung rhythm of Gerard Manley Hopkins still merits scholarly attention. Between them—what? When the focus is sharpened to English literature and the field opened beyond Rome things don't improve a great deal. That is, Donne's love lyrics ("This bed thy centre is . . .") are of more modern interest than,

say, his Holy Sonnets; George Herbert is notable not because of his theology but because of the typology of his poems (e.g., "Easter-Wings"); few outside—or even inside—universities are aware of *Sermons by the Late Rev. Mr. Sterne* (1769), but rare is the modern who doesn't have *Tristram Shandy.* One contribution of the Church to English literature that is commonly ignored, one that far outshines the effects of the good man of Hippo and Mr. Yorick on the modern novel and the poetry—secular or divine—of the prelates, is simply that during the Anglo-Saxon period, particularly after the other St. Augustine arrived at Canterbury (597), the Church kept written culture going. Many of the other social forces in the land at that time were primarily concerned with obtaining physical dominion over real estate, people, animals, etc. They would have undoubtedly gotten around to developing a literature (although of all of the thousands of languages that have been spoken, only about 106 have resulted in written literature), but things would have been set back considerably. That is, according to Walter J. Ong, S.J. (who is also responsible for the 106 figure), "Oral habits of thought and expression . . . still marked prose style of almost every sort in Tudor England some two thousand years after Plato's campaign against oral poets." Old habits die hard.

Many readers of the preceding sentence will mark it as a cliché and subsequently think less of the foregoing and following, as clichés are rather gauche. The reason why this is so is simply stated by Fr. Ong: "literates are educated never to use clichés, in principle." That, as he explains in his invaluable *Orality and Literacy,* is a key difference between oral and literate cultures: clichés and other formulaic expressions are vital to thinking in oral cultures. Thus, most literates think that they are far superior to those who use clichés and who can't even conceive of writing, to say nothing of typography or glowing characters on a cathode-ray tube. In many ways they are correct in this assumption, as Fr. Ong shows. However, he effectively deflates those egos. For example, people in English departments have been known to make lists of the best authors of all times. Lists, of course, are a product of writing. (Ong: "Indeed, writing was in a sense invented largely to make something like lists: by far most of the earliest writing we know, that in the cuneiform script of the Sumerians beginning around 3500 B.C., is account-keeping.") High on many of those lists is the name of Homer. Most know that the man accepted as being "Homer" was a blind bard, an *oral* poet. More-

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over, according to Fr. Ong, who relates the work of Milman Perry and other scholars, "it became evident that only a tiny fraction of the words in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were not parts of formulas, and to a degree devastatingly predictable formulas." He adds, "Homeric Greeks valued clichés because not only the poets but the entire oral poetic world or thought world relied upon the formulaic constitution of thought." Smugness about being beyond cliché is hard to maintain in light of the approach taken by the most revered of all ancients.

Fr. Ong's book is part of a series published by Methuen with the colophon "New Accents." The series includes *Structuralism and Semiotics, Linguistics and the Novel, Formalism and Marxism, Deconstruction: Theory and Practice,* and other similar titles. The topics covered by those books are influencing or will influence the way people read and write. Fr. Ong's text is both an excellent starting point for the pursuit of studies in those areas, and, more, a challenge to some of the theories proposed in them. To wit: "Jacques Derrida has made the point that 'there is no linguistic sign before writing.' But neither is there a linguistic 'sign' after writing if the oral reference of the written text is averted to." As Fr. Ong explains in a passage worth pondering by deconstructionists as well as other intelligent literates: "What the reader is seeing on this page are not real words but coded symbols whereby a properly informed human being can evoke in his or her consciousness real words, in actual or imagined sound. It is impossible for script to be more than marks on a surface unless it is used by a conscious human being as a cue to sounded words, real or imagined, directly or indirectly." Such rigor indicates that the Church is still an abiding force in the maintenance of literature. □

IN FOCUS

The Trials of Translators

***Acts and Letters of the Apostles;* Translated by Richard Lattimore;** Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York.

The difficulties that translators of Scripture face have changed rather dramatically over the centuries. John Wycliffe, "The Morning Star of the Reformation" who initiated the first English translation of the Bible, battled vigorous Church opposition to his efforts. Indeed, after his death, the Pope ordered his body exhumed and burned to express antipathy for his attempt to render Scripture in the vernacular. More than a century later when William Tyndale printed the first English New Testament in Cologne, Church authorities were again fiery in their wrath, burning all copies sent to England for distribution and putting the torch to the translator himself—this time *before* death. Nowadays, Bible translators could almost (but not quite) *wish* for such heated attention. No one is now burning Tyndale's masterful prose, largely preserved in the Authorized or King James Version of the Bible, but then relatively few people are reading it either—except perhaps as a purely philological exercise. One of the reasons for this neglect is that English is not now quite the same language that Tyndale wrote; many modern readers are put off by *ye* and *thou* and are confused when *let* is used to mean "hinder," *coasts* to mean "boundaries," and *prevent* to mean "go or speak before." A less important reason is that modern scholars have discovered a number of errors in the King James Version. (The KJV, for instance, gives *dragon* for the Hebrew word meaning "jackal" and *unicorn* for "wild ox.") But that these are not the primary reasons that Scripture has become a closed book is evident in the failure of excellent modern translations such as the Revised Standard Version or the Revised Berkeley Version to capture large and ardent readership.

In a curious way, modern translations are not read for the same reason that modern translators are never burned; neither are now taken seriously. Church leaders, Catholic and Protestant, are now almost unanimous in encouraging the efforts of contemporary translators, but in a coldly secular culture, spiritual leaders can kindle neither the faggots of the Inquisition nor the fires of popular acclaim. Further, because so much modern scholarship rests on skeptical premises, those in whom the embers of faith still glow are often somewhat distrustful of the unscathed living translator and rely instead on the talents of the martyred dead. Consequently, Richard Lattimore will probably receive neither persecution nor especially large royalty checks for his fresh and independent translation of *Acts and Letters of the Apostles.* However, since Lattimore is an intelligent and accomplished translator of Greek who can often illuminate constructions not clear in older translations, believers as well as academics would do well to follow the Apostle Paul's admonition to "examine everything, hold fast to the good" by including Lattimore's work in their scriptural library. Readers should remember, nonetheless, that Lattimore does work alone and that his work has not been systematically checked by any group of scholars of the sort jointly responsible for the KJV, RSV, and RBV. And since the insertions Lattimore feels are necessary for sentence sense are not italicized (as in the KJV) and are occasionally dictated by a doctrinal interpretation (as when he "clarifies" Paul's reference to "baptism for the dead" with the *ex cathedra* addition of words for which there is no analog in other translations), the scriptural law requiring that every word be established in the mouths of two or three witnesses is surely applicable. (BC) □

Of Parsis and Presbyterians

Eerdmans' Handbook to the World's Religions; Wm. B. Eerdmans; Grand Rapids, MI.

***A Documentary History of Religion in America: To the Civil War;* Edited by Edwin S. Gaustad;** Wm. B. Eerdmans; Grand Rapids, MI.

Some suppose that the investigation of churches or faiths other than one's own implies doubt concerning one's own path. Actually, such study may make the devout more effective witnesses to their own faith, as is evident in the Apostle Paul's skillful use of Greek polytheism when preaching on Mars' hill. Even more important as a motivation for studying others' faiths

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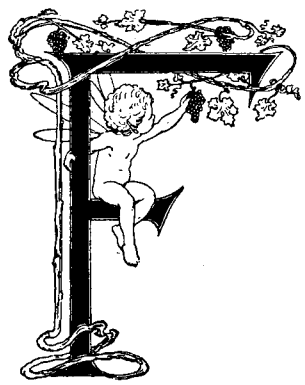
should be the kind of genuine love which seeks to understand even those human endeavors it cannot fully endorse. Consequently, believers as well as scholars should find much of value in *Eerdmans' Handbook to the World's Religions.* Though brevity does require



simplification and selection and though the ideological orientation of contributors seems suspect when they hail the "liberation theology" as a promising new development and glibly endorse the World Council of Churches' efforts on behalf of "oppressed peoples," this volume is a good introduction to most of the world's various religions—primal and sophisticated, communal and solitary, extinct and living, Western and Eastern. It is compact, well organized, fully illustrated and indexed, and includes a helpful "Rapid Fact-finder" for quick reference. The reader will discern evidence of the 50 contributors' avowed "Christian concern"; however, all of the writers genuinely strive to be even-handed, accurate, and even respectful in their assessment of non-Christian faiths. Their intent, as one contributor explains, is to "fill out and underline and tell in a new vocabulary the glory of God."

The glory of God is sounded in many distinctively American vocabularies—Christian and Deist, utopian and antinomian, Pentecostal and rational—in Edwin S. Gaustad's *Documentary History of Religion in America.* To be sure, it is no unified church choir the reader hears: Northern Presbyterian abolitionists rage against Southern Presbyterian slaveholders; Puritans expel and publicly whip Baptists; Christian whites slaughter and remove to reservations pagan Amerindians; monogamous Protestants martyr polygamous Mormons and drive their church west. Nevertheless, despite these tensions, blotches, ironies, and inhumanities, this collection of 200 documents—letters, sermons, proclamations, narratives—is united by a persistent and unmistakably sincere devotion to God among Americans in general and by a profound confidence in America as the land where that devotion may best flourish.

The freedom of individuals and communities in worshiping God as they will is still vouchsafed in America, but one rather fears that when Gaustad publishes his second volume concerning religious beliefs *since* the Civil War it will do less to substantiate Eerdmans's optimistic belief that "Christianity is more deeply rooted . . . than it or any religion has ever been" than it will to echo the pessimistic question concerning the longevity of faith posed by Jesus Himself: "When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" (BC) □

WASTE OF MONEY

Paradise Regained?

Robert Muller: ***New Genesis: Shaping a Global Spirituality;*** Doubleday; New York.

Tradition assigns authorship of the first book in the Judeo-Christian canon to Moses; most modern scholars disagree, variously assigning parts of it to two, four, or even more postulated writers. Whoever wrote it, Genesis's account of man's beginnings has captured the imagination of readers for centuries. Even many who do not accept Scripture literally concede that man's origin does seem rather miraculous and that *something* like the Fall must be invoked to explain man's endless struggle with evil and death and his consequent alienation from self, nature, and God. Robert Muller, who describes himself as "a good Catholic" and says that he believes in "the wise precepts and divine commandments of the Bible," nevertheless feels that the sacred text should be revised to create "a Bible which would show how the United Nations is a modern biblical institution." Accordingly, Muller wants to replace the chronicle of a fallible Adam and Eve cast out of Eden into a world of briars, decay, sin, and suffering with his *New Genesis,* "a proclamation of faith" in the inevitable triumph of the glorious "new, transcended species" of supermen who joyfully recognize in the United Nations the incipient creation of a New Eden fulfilling all that "the great prophets, visionaries, philosophers, and humanists had been dreaming of." No need to worry about any Serpent in this paradise: the "ever ascending course" of evolution is now inexorably transforming all men into marvelously loving creatures like U Thant and Dag Hammarskjöld. With all other noxious thistles and weeds, violent aggression, pornography, repressive secret police, racism, terrorism, greed, and hatred will shortly be left outside the adamantine walls of an idyllic world state. Very soon, the New Adam may simply reach out and pick spontaneously growing rights—the right to material well-being, the right to peace, the right to self-determination, the right to education. Enforcement of these rights will be guaranteed by an all-powerful and all-beneficent U.N. and will be quite simple since the whole human race (including, one must assume, Arafat and Andropov) is waxing ever more enthusiastic about all U.N. recommendations.

Any sensible reader who has witnessed the irreducible rancor and stupidity manifest in most U.N. debates will soon conclude that Muller's worshipful adoration of "the glass house on the East River of New York City" as the key to "the protection, survival and fulfillment of the human race on planet Earth" manifests a delirious mind, not intellectual insight. Bible readers will not be surprised: the old Genesis records that a previous attempt to gain access to heaven for mortals by erecting an international tower likewise produced incoherent babble. (BC) □

Box Office Bitterness

Ernest Lehman: ***Screening Sickness and Other Tales of Tinsel Town;*** Perigee Books; New York.

In Gulliver's third voyage there is an encounter with a breed called the Struldbruggs.

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These people are immortal, which is not the same as having a steady supply of mixer from Ponce de Leon's unfound fountain. The Struldbruggs are old, ailing, and crabby. While Ernest Lehman isn't old (born in 1920) and the state of his cardiovascular system is an unknown, his cantankerousness is not in doubt. He may be on his way to becoming the first Struldbrugg in Hollywood. Lehman is a screenwriter with credits including *North by Northwest, The Sound of Music,* and *West Side Story.* He wrote and produced *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and wrote, produced, and directed *Portnoy's Complaint.* But Lehman isn't one to rest on his laurels. Instead, he lashes out at those who he thinks are taking the bays away from him, specifically the young. Being a rather intelligent man, Lehman knows that few will listen to an out-and-out harangue. He sweetens things up with what is supposed to be humor but which, like many ersatz sugars, leaves a bitter aftertaste. Over and over again he alliteratively moans about "the Year of the Young, the Age of Acne." Steven Spielberg, George Lucas, Martin Scorsese come off as tyros needing training wheels on their cameras. In some cases, such as in the following, he genuinely makes his point about a Hollywood gone soft:

> There would be Brooke Shields as *Anna Karenina,* throwing herself under the wheels of Ricky Schroeder's tricycle. Gary Coleman would make his film debut in a remake of *Showboat,* singing the classic *Young Man River.* . . . Jodie Foster, Chevy Chase and Silver Springs in a sensitive treatment of youthful homosexual love, *Making Kaka.*

One problem with today's Hollywood is its penchant for sequels, remakes, and imitations. With precious few dim exceptions the essays in *Screening Sickness* show that the peevish Mr. Lehman is more of the modern age than he'd like to think. □

Portrait of the Artist as an Old Turkey

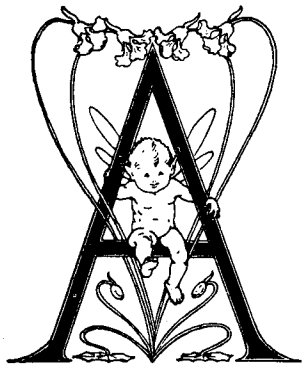
William Horwood: *The Stonor Eagles;* Franklin Watts; New York.

Imagine an adolescent fantasy about animals on the order of *Watership Down* or *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* interwoven with a mediocre *Bildungsroman* claiming distant kinship with *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man:* such is William Horwood's *The Stonor Eagles.* The animal story about sea eagles who fight man, other eagles, the elements, and, most of all, extinction in their North and Arctic Sea habitats would make passable entertainment by itself. But the entertainment sags into bathetic sentimentality under the superadded weight of the frame story, in which a Scottish sculptor named Stonor finds in the eagle tales told by his father the mythic inspiration for some of the greatest art of the 1980's and 90's. Consequently, the reader cannot enjoy the fiction of the birds simply as an innocuous amusement, but must look through the protagonist's eyes at the sea eagles as semi-divine incarnations of the most essential of human hopes and must therefore dread their extinction as a near-fatal blow to meaning and beauty in human life. Eagles *are* majestic creatures and may indeed appropriately symbolize many of man's aspirations. But when irrationally enthroned as *the* reigning deities in the temple of art, they inevitably waddle more than they soar. (BC) □

Piffling Puerility

Jill Robinson: *Dr. Rocksinger and the Age of Longing;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

Judging by the dustcover photograph of Ms. Robinson, she is in her late 30's; judging by



the abysmal quality of her fiction, she has never recovered from—or has recently relapsed into—adolescence. Governing *Dr. Rocksinger* as protagonist and narrator is Margot Fox, a radio talk-show interviewer with even less cerebral matter (is it possible?) than Phil Donahue. Stunned by the collapse of her "favorite marriage" (the third), Margot seeks therapeutic treatment from Hedy, a much younger rock singer who cures her broken heart by prescribing bed rest—with him, naturally. Likewise suffering from diseases of the soul are Margot's two cynical and aimless offspring, who also fornicate, do drugs, and wallow in self-pitying laments about the cruel meaninglessness of existence. A modern mother, Margot shows her love for her children by being a proper role model of self-actuated womanhood for them and by sympathetically "understanding" their antipathy for authority and discipline. Ms. Robinson, of course, never ironically undercuts the credibility of her youth-cult heroine and always puts comfortable padding on the consequences of her mindlessness. In the end, Margot's distinguished father lauds her for growing "from being a frightened little girl into a head of a household"; both teenage children inexplicably acquire new respect for their dissipated mother; while Margot congratulates herself for teaching her children "the urgency and interest of that search" for emotional satisfaction which she plans to continue with Hedy in England. For unintended hilarity, this fatuously happy ending can only be matched by a dust-jacket blurb asserting, "Somebody's in control here—an adult, writing about adult behavior." (BC) □

Erratum

We stand corrected. Several readers have contested our claim (in the September 1982 "Editor's Comment") that the defiant, noble phrase "All I wish is for you to remember, I was against!" was pronounced by Kurt Tucholsky, a German journalist and polemicist in the 1930's. The exclamation actually belongs to Carl von Ossietzky, a German antinazi intellectual writer, editor of *Weltbühne,* a Nobel Peace Prize winner, an early and impressive antifascist hero who perished in one of Hitler's concentration camps. There's no excuse for this kind of error.

The Editor.

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Some Like Them Lukewarm

***Tootsie;* Written by Larry Gelbart and Murray Schisgal (from a story by Don McGuire and Larry Gelbart); Directed by Sydney Pollack; Columbia Pictures.**

by Stephen Macaulay

During the 18th century, writers including Voltaire and Addison made use of characters from China or Persia. These splendid figures, arrayed in native trappings, would comment upon modern mores, morals, and habits existent in Paris or London. Part of the reason for this approach was that travel writing was very popular; people wanted to know how others in far-off lands lived and thought. More importantly, the writers used the form because it provided them with a perspective from which they could expose the follies and affectations of their contemporaries while protecting themselves with the mask of an innocent. The outsider on the inside can detect incongruities that those already on the inside cannot or care not to. The observation and rendering of the difference between what something appears to be and what something *is* can result in humor; in cases when this is performed most perspicaciously, the result is satire, as in Voltaire and Addison. Shakespeare often used the outsider on the inside for comedic effects. In most cases the outsider is a fool or a woman. In the latter case, the woman pretends to be a man—Rosalind /Ganymede in *As You Like It,* Viola/ Cesario in *Twelfth Night*—and so the humor springs from an unguarded view of what men think about women.

Tootsie is a rendition of the outsider on the inside. In this case, it is a man disguised as a woman. A common reaction is to call to mind *Some Like It Hot.* But Sydney Pollack is not Billy Wilder. More, Pollack, a facile director, doesn't seem to know who Sydney Pollack is. His filmography includes *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?, Jeremiah Johnson, The Way We Were, Three Days of the Condor,* and others. None of these is a particularly funny film; the keynote in each is social commentary. So, given a man in women's trappings and Pollack's background, satire might seem to be the objective. However, there are no real follies exposed, as is necessary for satire; there are no oppressive ERA statements, for example. So it might seem that Pollack's objective is to make a light comedy of manners. But that's not quite it, either. Indeed, there is little direction toward any defined end; the film is something of a ragout that requires more spice to achieve the level of *Some Like It Hot*—to say nothing of Messrs. Shakespeare, Voltaire, and Addison. □

Preadolescent Posturing

***The Verdict;* Written by David Mamet (based on the novel by Barry Reed); Directed by Sidney Lumet; Twentieth Century Fox.**

There have been countless movies—most featuring Robert Mitchum—with a structure so pat that it has passed beyond cliché to a state where it is taken for granted as a simple approach to movie construction. It's the story of the lapsed professional. That is, there is a doctor or a gunfighter (or the like) who, because of a single event (e.g., a patient dies or the wrong man is shot), loses faith in himself, unjustly, and turns to the bottle for its Lethe-like quality. A crisis then arises in the form of an operation that must be performed or a gang riding in at sunup. Said professional is aided by an agreeable male companion who serves as a nursemaid, then a shoulder to lean on. This companion's role is slowly but inexorably usurped by a beautiful woman. As the story unfolds, the question is whether the professional's hand will be steady enough to manipulate the scalpel or to squeeze the trigger. However, each member of the audience knows that there will be a successful outcome. Defeat, if there is any, takes the form of the male companion's death (this is more typical of Western or detective stories than medical thrillers) or the departure of the woman. Whereas either event would have led to a deep pull on what is inevitably rotgut at the opening of the picture, by the time the credits roll the professional is redeemed.

Sidney Lumet, for some bizarre reason, has decided to give this structure a bit of shoring up in *The Verdict.* That is, he makes the hero a lawyer, one who lapsed because his ideals were crushed by his mentors' act of jury tampering, for which the hero had to take the fall. His descent is precipitous. The challenge in this movie is a bit more than that of a brain tumor or three dozen thugs. The blear-eyed lawyer must take on (1) the medical profession, (2) the Catholic Church, (3) the court system, all of which can be characterized as a priesthood, all of which can be simplistically tagged with the adjective *corrupt.* Few things presented on a screen are more banal, perhaps only home movies of the Grand Canyon. *The Verdict* is nothing more than a vehicle for Paul Newman driven by Lumet. Lumet's credentials have always been in order. Newman, however, must think it necessary to brush his off, lest people think he's more con-

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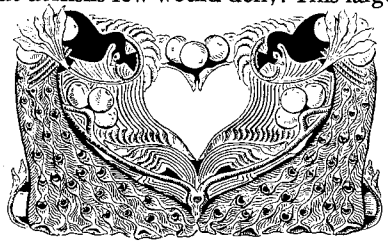
cerned with salad dressing and carburetors than Just Causes. So in a matter of minutes Lumet and Newman show that doctors make mistakes and, if they're famous, cover them up; that the Church is still concocting plots with its powerful purse (says Newman to a prelate as he fondles a check for $210,000 that he will not take from the sullied holy man, "If I took it, I would be lost"; the music of a celestial choir is implied); and that judges are invariably failed lawyers who are "bag boys for the men downtown." However, the pair is cautious in its handling of the hero. This is the first post-nonhero age—remember all of the polls that indicated that there was no one "to believe in" during the 70's?—so it wants fallible but successful heroes (e.g., Indiana Jones of *Raiders of the Lost Ark,* TV's *Magnum P.I.*). The lawyer thusly stumbles to success with a more ragged gait than that of his filmic predecessors. Perhaps the only twist to the plot, one that could be indicative of a pro-E.R.A. statement, is that he rejects the girl. However, that rejection is really on par with the intellectual maturity of *The Verdict:* all preadolescent boys know that girls are "ucky," just as seminal minds like Lumet and Newman know that doctors aren't really admirable, the Church is corrupt . . . Messrs. Lumet and Mamet, the authors, seem fully oblivious to the serious meaning of drama, one manifest in works as variegated as those by Sophocles, Shakespeare, D.W. Griffith, and John Ford. Namely, that there is a distinction between better and worse. To Lumet and Mamet, the world is crudely Manichaean, simply bad or good, exactly the way it appears to dim-witted juveniles, jaundiced utopians, and hard-bitten punks. (SM) □

ART

Art & Ideology

Rockwell Kent: An Anthology of His Work; Edited by Fridolf Johnson; Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

One admires Rockwell Kent's art in somewhat the same way one is compelled to accept Jane Fonda's acting ability or Muhammad Ali's boxing prowess—reluctantly, granting near-grudging respect for accomplishments in their fields of competence, though one has only contempt for the ideological positions they have espoused. That Mr. Kent was great with brush, pencil, and woodcut utensils few would deny. This large, beautifully appointed volume provides ample testimony to his skills and versatility. But Mr. Johnson's biographical text paints another portrait—one of a man of astonishing arrogance, egotism, and sociopolitical naiveté. The demise of his first two marriages seems to have baffled Kent—despite his year-long absences, his frequent and freely admitted infidelities, and his almost total absorption in his own work to the detriment of any personal relationships. His willingness to perform manual labor and his exaltation of the working class are at striking odds with his apparent conviction, from the first, that private philanthropy or the government or someone should provide support for artists and the arts sufficient to enable the practitioners to concentrate solely on their work, thus freeing them from such prosaic matters as paying rent, bills, etc. His ideological and political convictions were at best silly, at worst dangerous—although that's not how Kent, himself, saw it, of course. But how else can one characterize the sentiments of a man who termed U.S. involvement in Vietnam an "utterly unprovoked and illegal invasion"? He therefore sent to the Vietnamese ambassador in Moscow $10,000: "it being but a token of my shame and sorrow."



It is a truism that art and ideology are linked inextricably and complexly. Kent's powers of visualizing intrinsic literary, particularly poetic, contents establishes him as one of the most impressive and seminal illustrators in the American history of art. He had a wonderful way of endowing his work with a sense of style and a striking force of imagery that transcended the idiosyncrasies of his epoch. He was highly impressionable, and blatant echoes of other masters and graphic languages sometimes haunt his output. But only unconscionable sticklers would consider that a case against him. □

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Letter from West Germany: Freedom: Question & Answer Time in Frankfurt on the Main.

by Noel A. Black

About 75 participants, representing every country of Western Europe and the United States, attended "For Your Freedom and Ours," a conference sponsored by The Rockford Institute in November 1982 in Frankfurt on the Main, West Germany. Those in attendance were of various stripes of political and philosophical beliefs: there were self-admitted socialists, humanists, Christian democrats, social democrats—certainly a cross section of current Western European ideological attitudes. Many dimensions of freedom were explored. The limitations were described thoroughly by some, but perhaps most tersely in a paradigm by Leopold Tyrmand, one of the speakers: he compared freedom to the classic jazz musician who has complete innovative scope so long as he stays within the structure of the composition.

Yet some puzzling questions hung in the air during the sessions. Why were we —Americans, presenters and participants alike—having such difficulty being understood in basic parts of our value system? For anyone who travels throughout the world on business it is a puzzle. In fairness, we can also detect the same feeling in the United States. Even in daily exchanges we are plagued not so much by an inability to communicate certain concepts, as by the recognition that the ideas are not fully comprehended by the listener. The final discussion period revealed what may be the key to Americans' inability to penetrate the understanding of so many other people. Perhaps feeling the same frustration I was experiencing, a young man from Britain observed that Americans speak of freedom in significantly different terms than Europeans. He described an apparent set of assumptions, unclear to him, from which Americans operated and which made it difficult for Europeans to comprehend precisely why Americans react so strongly in any discussion of liberty.

In one of those rare insights that make life exciting, I recalled a text I had read some years before. Its point was that there is a fundamental difference between the United States and all other nations of the world, free or unfree. And that difference is contained in the assumptions of the founders of our nation and stated succinctly in the Declaration of Independence. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Our founders started with a clean slate, stating for the world certain principles they held to be true and which undergird both the Declaration and the Constitution.

Musing about that, one can surmise that, unique in the world, the United States springs from a recognition that freedom comes from God. Human institutions do *not* grant liberty. Governments don't grant it to their citizens, but God grants freedom to his creatures who, in turn, form governments and institutions to safeguard it. Freedom stems from the very fact of our God-given humanity, from the reality of transcendentally created human beings, not from the transient institutions of man.

The European experience is different. It springs from centuries of struggle of individual humans to assert their freedom and their rights against governments of every sort who would grant unwillingly, slowly, only the tiniest incremental progress on the road to freedom. And, because human authority is seen as the source of freedom, it is unremarkable when government limits freedom. Although many Americans no longer recognize this difference, it is part of our cultural heritage. In a sense, it's in our blood. When our government attempts to abridge our freedom in any way, we rebel loudly, often to the dismay and amusement of non-Americans. In the current idiom, they just don't understand where we are coming from. For generations, other peoples of the world have recognized that America has a special kind of freedom. They have understood it well enough to be desperate to come to America. Our history includes the reception, sometimes grudgingly, of vast numbers of people from every civilization and country. All of them knew we had something they wanted. To a point, we have been willing to share it with them, and they have thrived in our midst. No society before ours had a better recognition of what creativity is unleashed when people are free.

Will man therefore fight merely for the preservation of a political or economic order? Sometimes he will, although asking him to do so involves the issue of a meaningful commitment. But note how millions who have never even considered freedom as a divine gift will nevertheless fight to the death to preserve their own freedom, even if it is vastly limited compared to ours. Neither the speakers nor the discussants of the conference addressed themselves directly to this question. Maybe because the problem of the personal and social motivations of the fight for freedom remains mankind's most impenetrable secret—and anyone who senses its essence prefers to be discreet in order to make his or her own commitment credible. As Leszek Kolakowski, the respected Polish philosopher, stated in his presen-

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tation, "The right to freedom as inherent to man cannot be proved empirically, but at all times, man has attempted to be free and has rebelled against unreasonable unfreedom." Whether one accepts the existence of God or not, Kolakowski's statement stands. I choose to accept it as demonstration of the source of freedom.

Is it thus worth defending ourselves from those who would deny even the most basic economic, political, and social freedoms that we so abundantly enjoy? I will do everything in my power to assure my children and grandchildren that they will never face the gulag. It is the least I can do in thanks to the God who has granted me liberty. I pray that other still-free people might come to recognize not just the source of their freedom, but the transcending importance of guarding it in reaffirmation of their own humanity.

Letter from New York: Era of Illusions

by Alan J. Levine

In the summer of 1982, New York City was the center of one of the biggest political demonstrations of recent years —a demonstration in favor of a nuclear freeze. Now, I regard a nuclear freeze as a measure that, at best, might give the world as much relief as Anatole France thought socialism would—as much as a sick man turning over in bed—and, at worst, as an exercise in suicidal stupidity. So I missed that splendid occasion, though in lower Manhattan I had to dodge the marching ranks of the Lesbian Nationalist Party en route to save the world. And, as one often does, I reacted to the eruption of emotionalism and propaganda by refusing even to think about nuclear war or the Cold War. But a real stimulus to thought on those perennial issues soon landed on my desk: John Lewis Gaddis's *Strategies of Containment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982). Professor Gaddis is also the author of *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War.* He provides a sound and stimulating commentary on postwar American foreign policy—a field which has been dominated by fools and charlatans for nearly two decades.

In discussing world affairs, people's fears seem to concentrate primarily either on the "Bomb" or on totalitarian conquest. One of those fears is largely the property of the left, the other of the right. Yet, in reality, each view of the problem is so dangerously narrow that the two problems actually become one.

Gaddis's book will not provide a key to dealing with this symbiosis, but it does contribute to understanding it.

Several periods in the development of American Cold War strategy are treated. The first period was that from 1945 to 1950, in which Kennan's doctrine of the "containment" of Soviet power became American policy. The second was the Korean War era, during which the Truman administration adopted the policies recommended by Paul Nitze in National Security Council Paper 68. The third was the Eisenhower era, during which American policy became dependent on nuclear weapons to deter local as well as global conflicts. The fourth was the Kennedy-Johnson era of "flexible response," of growing concentration on communist threats to backward countries—and the era of Vietnam. The fifth period was that of Nixon, Ford, Carter, and "détente." Within these five periods, Gaddis sees an alternation between policies which he calls "symmetrical" and "asymmetrical" responses to Soviet, or communist, threats. The "asymmetrical" policies of Kennan, the Eisenhower administration, and the détente era, while differing in many aspects, all rejected the notion of countering every enemy move or of building up an equivalent to every Soviet capability. They sought instead to pit American strengths against Soviet weaknesses. Each emphasized the exploitation of divisions within the communist world. It may come as a surprise that Eisenhower and Dulles had a highly sophisticated interest in promoting such feuds; this fact, long ignored by their critics, is brought out by Gaddis.

Policies of "symmetrical response," however, did envisage defensive counters to every enemy move and capability, and in general promoted a more intensive approach to the communist threat. It was fiscally liberal and Keynesian-oriented administrations that tended to pursue such policies; since any liberal administration in the near future is not likely to favor a strong foreign policy, this set of ideas is probably a thing of the past. While also banking on the value of intra-communist struggles and nationalist resistance to communist domination, believers in the "symmetrical response" regarded them as insufficient. Unfortunately the efforts required for "symmetrical" policies have been so expensive and painful that they have not lasted very long.

Though there is some continuity between the ideas of NSC-68 and those of the Kennedy-Johnson era, there is little

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similarity among the "asymmetrical" periods. The concept behind "détente," while not a complete departure from containment, certainly bears little resemblance to the world view of Dulles, who did not expect negotiations to prove useful. Gaddis does not try to pretend, as have some recent writers on the Eisenhower era, that Ike was some sort of closet pacifist: a moderate liberal, Gaddis has a surprisingly friendly view of the Eisenhower administration. In contrast, Nixon and Kissinger invested more hopes in negotiations than any American leader since Roosevelt. Indeed, Gaddis stresses that they hoped to *integrate the U.S.S.R. into the existing world order* and thus end the Cold War. Essentially, it was a return to FDR's worst illusions of 1943, and it disregarded all the hideously expensive lessons learned about the Soviets since then. Gaddis states that during the 1970's the "Soviets launched a whole new series of challenges to the global balance of power"; meanwhile, "the Nixon-Ford years saw the most substantial reduction in American military strength relative to that of the USSR in the entire postwar period." But for all of Nixon's and Kissinger's alibis, and the admitted incompetence of their successors, the fact is that détente was a failure and a disaster. It is no defense of Carter, for whom Gaddis barely disguises his contempt, to note that the West was already in dire straights before his election. Kissinger's, and even Nixon's, supposed polish and expertise at international affairs would seem to be at great variance with the clownish Carter team, or the long-discredited Roosevelt optimism. Yet the results of, and even the ideas behind, their policies were not as different as it might appear. As Gaddis himself dryly notes, "What Presidents and their advisors think are innovations are usually not that at all but rather some earlier administration's forgotten mistakes."

One of the most persistent mistakes of the postwar period is a faith in nationalism as a force ultimately favorable to Western interests: Kennedy used to define our goal as a "world of diversity" as opposed to the totalitarians, who cannot accept national otherness and difference. On examination, however, this view turns out to be sheer wishful thinking. It is no exaggeration to suggest that nationalism—quite different from patriotism—is one of the most destructive forces of our century. Far from being an obstacle to totalitarianism and Soviet power, nationalism has often been the entering wedge for it. In practice, Americans did realize that postwar nationalist fervor in Europe was an obstacle to European unity and hence to any policy blocking Soviet expansion, but there has been a remarkable reluctance to recognize that Asian and African nationalisms are also destructive. This deleteriousness is not necessarily intentional; a fair proportion of Asian and African leaders have sought nothing more than to be permitted to run their own affairs, but their political struggles have generally been at the expense of the Western democracies. And a fair proportion have not been moderate at all: men like Sukarno, Khomeini, and Nasser. It is often noted that communism has had only meager successes in the Third World. That was also true in interwar Europe, but the nationalist fanatics invariably gave the totalitarian manipulators their chance.

The all-time award for wishful thinking, however, should go to those who have consistently deprecated the hold of Leninist doctrine on the Soviets and other communist leaderships. This has been a persistent theme in every American administration but that of Eisenhower. Kissinger's outlook on international affairs was similar to FDR's in that it rejected "ideology" as an explanation for Soviet behavior. Even Kennan and Nitze believed that Leninism was a flimsy justification, rather than a real motivating factor, for the Soviet regime. Now, no one would claim that communist ideology is the *sole* explanation for the behavior of the Soviet regime: many events—the Great Purges, the rifts between the Soviets and the Chinese and the Yugoslavs—cannot be explained by ideology. But very few of the Soviet Union's basic policies can be explained *without* accepting the fact that the leadership believes in and feels itself bound by doctrine. Some of the Soviets' worst failures have derived from their insistence on ideology over reality: farm collectivization, for instance, although an unending disaster, continues in the U.S.S.R. and is imposed on every new communist country. Stalin has often been dismissed as a cynic who abandoned world revolution: actually, it was because he was blinded by Marxist categories that his intrigues in China failed. It must be admitted, however, that Lenin's emphasis on the role of power and conflict in world affairs has at least spared the communists the blinkers worn by most democratic powers, whose habitual optimism has led, time and again, straight to disaster.

Looking at the illusions chronicled by Gaddis, one begins to feel that if they were exploded, the West would simply rush to find new ones. A pro-freeze demonstration, unmoored in either history or rationality and inanely staged in the streets of New York, seems like a tailor-made illustration of Professor Gaddis's concerns. □

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The American Proscenium

The American Tragedy

Tragedy, as everybody knows, means an inevitable catastrophe written into a cobweb of factors created by character traits, emotion, circumstance, or fate. Although in drama, tragedy deals with individuals, it naturally may become an existential pattern for communities, societies, nations. Contemporary unemployment obviously is not only an economic, but also a historical, sociostructural, and moral phenomenon. As such, it acquires a tragic dimension. Entire industries are doomed to die, and human destinies are inextricably connected to that socioeconomic fact.

The liberals—whose socioethical stance in matters of relations between business and labor has largely contributed to the weakening of industrial productivity, making possible the demise of once-viable portions of the American economy—have no idea what to do with the predicament. Officially, they recommend recipes which have been tried many times, failed many times, and actually are at the origin of the current calamity. Nonliberals are divided. Some advocate solutions which certainly look, at our moment of history, like asking an undernourished horse to haul an incapacitated Cadillac. Those who put their trust in government hope that the state can solve an issue of such eschatological magnitude. But others think, with clarity and good sense, that only a powerful revival of the spirit of private initiative, a massive switch to the small-business ethos will do the job. They believe that some ideas supported by the government about how to create a climate conducive to the small-scale individual enterprise are necessary. Those are people who call themselves conservatives. This adjective, paradoxical as it seems, has come to denote some kind of functional and sanguine idealism and a fresh supply of socioeconomic perceptions. These are factors of hope and dynamism which long ago evaporated from liberal prescriptions. Thus, we suggest that if the tragedy of unemployment is to be thwarted and turned into a positive—or at least acceptable—outcome, it will be only by getting help from the pool of ideas that, in the press, are still called—scoffingly—conservative.

The Great Nuclear Debate

Rhetoric on the debate is innundating the pages of American publications of every stripe, and it certainly looks like an imposing altercation of concerned and conflicting intellects. It is the debate of our age, held on what is incontestably the largest forum in history: Western civilization at the end of its 20th-century stage, whose formidable means of amplifying ideas and counterideas has reached a point where *any* imposition of falsehood as truth (or vice versa) upon human minds has been made both possible and feasible.

Yet, in contrast to many respected statesmen and journalists who believe that the debate is both vital and helpful, we see it as futile, invalid, and useless. Not until the debaters can prove that their arguments, sorrows, reasonings, agonies, speculations, fears, hopes, and knowledge generate any reverberation in the largest expanse of social silence in history—that is, Soviet Russia—will their respectable efforts or doleful histrionics make any more sense than a kiddie puppet show. One needs no Machiavellian perspicacity to recognize that the discussion quite clearly limits America's ability to defend itself, without a shred of evidence that it has any impact on Soviet policies—which are virtually immune to the worries of its own citizenry, let alone any moral principles of international behavior. Thus, as things stand now, the Soviet Union calls the shots—let's hope not literally—in this game. Consequently, anyone who supports Soviet shot-calling, regardless of his intentions, becomes an objective tool (and we know how this term is scorned and hated) of the Soviet *raison d' état* at this historical moment—all the rightness and reasonableness of his thoughts and feelings notwithstanding. □

Liberal Culture

Traditional Humor

An ad in *Village Voice* reflects this paper's cozy acceptance of old religious customs, holidays, and traditions.

> RADICAL LESBIAN FEMINIST TERRORIST COMEDY GROUP HALLOWEEN SHOW. OCT. 1, 2, 8, 9, 15, 22 BARROW ST. $5.

The room, of course, will be decorated with limbs torn by bomb explosions, some male paraphernalia collected from booby traps, and other funny things. □

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LIBERAL CULTURE

Mommy Dearest

A *New York Times Book Review* contributor by the misleading name of Mr. Atlas writes about Mr. Irving Howe's book *A Margin of Hope,* which chronicles the vicissitudes of the noted circle of New York liberal and leftist intellectuals from the 1930's to the present:

> To begin with, who *were* these intellectuals? My scorecard tallies with Mr. Howe's: 'The leading critics were Rahv, Phillips, [Lionel] Trilling, [Harold] Rosenberg, Abel, and [Alfred] Kazin. The main political theorist was [Sidney] Hook. Writers of poetry and fiction related to the New York milieu were Delmore Schwartz, Saul Bellow, Paul Goodman, and Isaac Rosenfeld. And the recognized scholar, and also inspiring moral force, was Meyer Schapiro.

A bit further, Mr. Atlas draws some conclusions:

> From beginning to end, it is a story of cultural innocence and narrow vision, disappointment and defeat, a chronicle of feuds and petty factionalism so dispiriting that a reader of my generation comes away wondering how this dedicated band of intellectuals had the stamina to pursue a course that condemned them to exist forever on the margins of society, denied even the hope of influence or power.

One's first reaction has to be: "C'mon, Mr. Atlas, who are you kidding—us or yourself? Do you *really* believe that this 'band of intellectuals' has ever existed—then or now—'on the margins of society, denied even the hope of influence or power'?" For the last 30 years, entire departments at major universities have lived, and still do, by the words of Lionel Trilling; Harold Rosenberg went on to become the ruler and conscience of all Madison Avenue galleries; Paul Goodman governed the 1960's; both Mr. Kazin and Mr. Howe himself are today the darlings and oracles of the official quasi-literary establishment—from *Time* to *Rolling Stone, Esquire,* and *Mother Jones*—they are even lovingly quoted and interviewed in the Sunday supplements in Dubuque. It may be that Professor Hook and Saul Bellow are somewhat scorned and occasionally harassed, but then both have assumed a rather revisionist stance toward the left's sway over American liberalism.

But why bother to ask? Mr. Atlas strenuously supports American pluralism according to the *New York Times's* gospel, whose directive is: the more unlimited power, fame, credits, influence, honors, accolades, and ordinary perks and gains one gathers, the louder he may cry wolf and claim to be a persecuted victim. Of late, that attitude is best illustrated by the words *Mommy Dearest.* □

Free Will & the Immortal Soul

Mother Jones, the organ of the tender procommunism in the souls of corporate scions, bewails the democratic expression of popular will that brought down Mr. Ed Asner, together with his support for the Latin American communist guerrillas. Inevitably, *MJ* calls it "suppression of free speech," "McCarthyism," and "censorship." Those who have proffered such phrases include such giants of constitutional erudition as Robert Redford and Jane Fonda. Also having opinions are other stars of the procommunist conscience of America, like one Mr. Norman Fleishman who, inadvertently, states things we all know but of which we always need to be reminded:

> 'Entertainment is the only way to reach masses of people. . . . Joe McCarthy and the other blacklisters were correct. . . . If you want to do the most damage, go after the entertainment people.'

And the *Mother Jones* mavens, with their own sense of intellectual integrity, add the finishing points:

> The Right is also adept at grooming celebrities for political leadership—the charming storyteller who currently occupies the White House being the most notable example. Perhaps the final lesson of the *Lou Grant* affair is that progressives simply need a more effective celebrity strategy if we want to continue to get our ideas into the spotlight.

From these sentences emerge two basic "truths," actually nuggets of boorish mendacity, quite proper for the tycoons' progeny in the spasms of a collective, infantile temper tantrum: 1) that Mr. Reagan did not choose his ideological avocation but was "groomed" for it—a Skinnerian specimen programmed by some sinister forces that implant world views in minds of "charming" human samples; 2) that the poor, helpless, victimized American left does not do, or even know how to do, things like that. As if the 50 years of ruthless engineering of "love" for the Soviet Union, which has delivered almost half the world to lethal communist domination, has *not* been arranged by the common front which stretches from the CPUSA to the *New York Times* (their occasional differences notwithstanding), but by the Boy Scouts or the Baptists. □

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Useful Idiocy

When Lenin wrote about useful idiots, he had in mind innocent, naive liberals who could be seduced into backing Soviet bestiality by the absence of an empirical approach: their self-contrived vision of utopia could be sustained by meticulously isolating them from any evidence. Half a century later, we have mountains of experience and evidence. Yet useful idiots are flourishing among us, as rabid as ever in their polemical enthusiasm, cozily nested in the editorial offices of "respectable" publications. The idiocy became institutionalized, and outlets of bygone intellectual integrity like *The Nation* became their current bastions. In a recent editorial *The Nation* advises the U.S. government *not* to help Afghani freedom fighters and resisters because—according to that journal's starry-eyed Soviet devotees—the Kremlin is now looking for a "fair" agreement there:

> Well, Washington certainly isn't doing much to help the agreement along. Its continuing covert aid to the Afghani insurgents does nothing to persuade them to settle for a share of power in a coalition government.

This is written 37 years after Yalta, where the West agreed to coalition governments all over Eastern Europe in which the noncommunists would settle for a share of power. The liberal useful idiots in America then sang hymns about and recited prayers to the Soviet magnanimity, honesty, and fairness, never noticing that within a couple of years the democratic share in Czechoslovakia went out the window in the person of Jan Masaryk, who was defenestrated by Mr. Andropov's predecessors at the KGB, while the Polish share was either fleeing the country or being transported to Siberia. But *The Nation's* burlesque show continued: the useful idiots still sing and dance against the stage props of the Afghan tragedy to the merriment of the Politbureau, which roars with thunderous cackle. □

Hard Hype

"Choosing a computer, like selecting a spouse, can be a daunting undertaking." So begins one of *Time*'s pieces on the computers in the "Machine of the Year" issue with which *Time* closed 1982 (even though it's dated January 3, 1983). It's difficult to overestimate the shallowness, stupidity, and platitudinous "sense of humor" of the quoted sentence. It's *Time* style, and it somehow explains why most letters that get printed in the magazine's "Letters" (to the editor) section are from lowbrow correspondents. That one sentence also epitomizes why *Time* has become the most successful purveyor of cheap raptures, plastic world views, formicalike understandings. A mind furnished by *Time* is inexpensively

assembled according to an enclosed set of ideological and existential directives and perfectly ready to be marketed by any mail-order house.

The story on computers is a proper example of the depth of *Time's* insight into our sociohistoric circumstances. According to its editors, the personal home computer now being promoted by the electronics industry in America means a new civilizational revolution—on par with the revolutions engendered by the invention of the wheel, the steam engine, or the radio. It's one thing to make a banal generalization, quite another to prove it, especially in the field of interrelation between technological progress and the fate of societies and individuals. Computers have certainly had a large impact on our current reality: they have transformed military hardware; they have shaken up the methodology of industrial production; they have dramatically improved vast areas of commercial services. They have touched the contemporary lives of both nations and humans. Yet there's little possibility that they will generate any transmutation of human destinies—in an existential, emotional, or cognitive sense—as the railway did (by demolishing previous notions of distance and economic exchange), or the telephone (by totally altering the sense of personal presence, with till-then unbelievable consequences for human contacts ranging from matters of life and death to adultery), or the automobile (by overturning all previous notions of privacy and personal mobility). Any of the upheavals in modes of transportation carried a new sense of tragedy, of appointments in Samarra (due to the Hegelian principle of the intercourse between quantity and quality), and thus mapped out new frontiers of the individual lot. The radio gave the world an entirely new set of rules for collective participation in history; TV changed our lives through the vulgarization of knowledge and dreams, through nurturing two cancerlike growths (terrorism and crime) on our communal body by rewarding the worst cruelty with instant fame, and through making smooth talk and handsome faces into political virtues. Now, *that's* a revolution. It brought suffering to us all, and it's doubtful whether the computer will even come close to affecting our lives that much. Even if sophisticated software can be programmed to schedule orgasms or to chart the parameters of proper digestion, it won't ever be qualified to write a love letter. □

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How Clever . . .

Chicago Tribune, the Second City's second-rater, reports with relish on some opinion-poll flummery under an inherently approving title:

> Staying single shows gain as acceptable life

The source of the *Tribune's* joy is that:

> The 18-year-olds were asked how much it would bother them if they did not marry. . . . 23.5 percent—29.4 percent of the sons and 17.2 percent of the daughters—said it would not bother them at all.

Eighteen-year-olds, as everybody knows, are famous for mature judgments of and projections for their own future. We would propose that *Tribune's* antimarriage pollsters approach the same people some 30 years from now. □

Doonesbury, RIP

Despite various rumors and surmises, it looks as if the Doonesbury comic strip is dead. We'll miss it—we had come to like its valiant attempts to transcend the lowbrow nature of its medium in the name of cultural literacy. Its graphics-cum-punchline style evidenced the oldest act of justice: success for intelligence-cum-innovation. In contrast to many—who saw themselves in the cartoon—we saw it as a cheerful indictment: we did not identify with its characters, their vicissitudes, their fashionable dim-wittedness, their joys and sorrows of flattened, upper-class decadence, their afflictions of minds enfeebled by existential prosperity. Mr. Trudeau elevated amoebas from *The New Yorker* suburbia to a level of self-mockery and endowed them with the charm of blithely fading liberals who in the hour of their demise were oblivious to their own mental and moral exhaustion, ignorant of how to use reason or feeling correctly. They were elegant, suave, ingratiating, amusing, witty—and impotent. We are sorry the show is over. □

The Triumph of Metaphysics

The *Wall Street Journal,* a publication more sensible than some others, is on its way to actual wisdom. We saw a headline there:

> How the Top Students
> At Harvard Business
> Fare 20 Years Later
>
> ---
>
> Most Do Well Financially,
> But Few Lead Big Firms;
> The Importance of Luck

Confidence in metaphysics is laudable. More of the *Fiddler on the Roof*-style musing and less of the smart-alecky, pinko-tinctured dialectics on the op-ed page would make the *Journal* interesting even to Montaigne. □

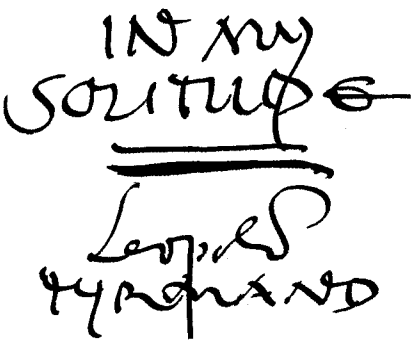
Family Love

In *Time,* the most rewarding mental retreat for the American demi-intelligentsia, we read of late the magazine's semimaven on matters of the press, one Thomas Griffith, who confidently assured us that:

> Jane Fonda . . . hasn't changed all that much; opinion has. In most American families, she is now regarded as the niece with strident and unpopular opinions that are accepted as part of her.

Not in our family. Nor in those families we know. Perhaps Mr. Griffith is the victim of a desperate search for a metaphor and has lost his semantic compass. "Family" means something different than the offices of *Time* and *Mother Jones.* Ms. Fonda is regarded as niece only by the Hanoi Politbureau and as cousin by *Pravda.* □

Regardless of how often I may be sneered at, I will stubbornly maintain that the very core of American populism is neither self-righteous ignorance, nor dime-store religiosity, nor shallow political fickleness, nor grubby socio-economic grabbiness, nor nativist hubris, nor some lowbrow outcry for in-



stant justice. All those unprepossessing parameters of the populistic faith and drive do exist, and they occasionally become crassly visible in life and politics. Yet, as I see things, deeply embedded in the tabernacle of American populistic beliefs and propensities is a worship of holy honesty, of firm, noble, manly loyalty to one's own word and principle.

The latter-day populism appears to be linked with increasing frequency to recent definitions of modern American conservatism, and, I think, correctly so. Thus, in spite of all my personal good wishes, I believe that President Reagan has gravely impaired his chances for re-election, and for a prominent place in history, precisely because he has either misunderstood or just apostatized by destroying the correlation of his persona, his image, and his career with the clearly emerging conservative-populistic juncture in the national consciousness. Consequently, instead of becoming a valid and viable emblem of this confluence of propitious perceptions, during the last two years he has done almost everything to, one might say, *de*symbolize himself. Which may be his political and ideological Waterloo.

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What Mr. Reagan actually did, in the apt words of an unsympathetic political commentator, was to offend a large, perhaps crucial, part of his own constituency. From the outset in the Oval Office, Mr. Reagan has been surrounded by political strategists, consultants, pollsters, and professional mavens who use computers, produce charts, map out tactical moves, and pride themselves on being able to research, analyze, and program any vector or tendency of public opinion. They rely on a technologized and systematized vision of human affairs, which, they assume, can be thoroughly x-rayed, diagnosed, interpreted, and classified according to methodologically categorized issues. All that giant apparatus of introspection is supposed to go as deeply as is possible into the collective American mind, as well as into the souls of individual voters, and wrench from them what Mr. Reagan's advisers seem to see as the essence of existence, the crux of man's efforts on this earth, the Golden Fleece for a politician's success—namely votes, a lot of them, and all available at the proper moment, that is, at the day of election. In the process of dreaming about and yearning for votes, Mr. Reagan's men tend to ignore something that may be *more* important to a statesman and leader—namely, human feelings. In their zeal to get political mechanisms moving, they have lost the sense of what could be called an insult to the feelings of those who elevated Mr. Reagan to the Presidency in the first place.

One can argue about *what*—in terms of voters' emotions—did put Mr. Reagan in the White House. Socioeconomic vicissitudes and political climates unquestionably played an enormous role in producing the Reagan victory and Presidency. But to my mind, the bottom line was something less definable in terms of an electoral campaign, something more delicate than the voting act itself, something more profoundly burrowed in the souls of the electorate, something less penetrable by PR and political-marketing machinery. This agent can be tentatively described as a sort of confused revulsion mixed with an irrepressible longing for a reality with stable, comprehensible, sociomoral norms. I would say that it's exactly this ingredient which gave Mr. Reagan the Presidency, of which two years have been devoted to abandoning its cultivation and substituting for it the promotional gadgetry relished by the Republican Party's demi-intelligent hacks who professionally "know" what makes people vote in America of the 1980's.

Many of those hacks even deem themselves conservatives and would feel exasperated if told that they do not understand the current meaning of the word. Yet their country-club conservatism is a feeble phantom: these days it has actually deteriorated to the level of some specific corporate color blindness which predicates its infirmity and emasculation. The cognizance of grass-roots concerns for larger-than-life justice, fairness, and ethical order seems to have vanished from both the vocabulary and the arsenal of "regular" ("moderate," "traditional," "middle-of-the-road") Republican operatives; their class-unconsciousness has acquired some bizarre, if not grotesque, formulations. Theirs is a conservatism of donors to both the Republican Party *and* the Ford Foundation's projects, to programs whose chief aims are to stave off a mythical social revolution that is nowhere in the making, to suffuse this society with spurious, hypocritical solicitudes, with civil rights for behavioral anarchy, with social conscience for abstractly contrived needs and alleged, melodramatized wrongs. In that respect these "conservatives" meekly respond to the culture of cheerful, self-serving nihilism, the product of which is colloquially called the liberal establishment of the satiated and cynical upper classes—whose psychological satisfactions are derived from "causes" of a factitiously progressive bent. It is this nihilistic "class-consciousness" of moneyed searchers for "truths" which has spawned cohabitation in Yale dorms, drug theology at Harvard and Berkeley, the exciting bestiality of the Rolling Stones' message (worth billions in stinking profits), and engendered the cult of subhumanness that is transmitted to masses by *Playboy, Hustler,* and *High Times.* This cultural Armageddon is annihilating the sense of civilizational security that was once guaranteed by the norms which the common folk still crave. For 20 years or more, Ronald Reagan promised to fight this establishment and its false ideals tooth and nail. He created for himself the image of an incorruptible St. George who wouldn't lay down his sword until the dragon was slain. People came to believe him; they pinned their last hopes on him.

He came to power, and, two years later, those whom he had proclaimed for years were his archenemies are now cherished guests at White House dinners and celebrations. He is fawning upon the most ruthless notables of the Walter Cronkite empire, the same ones he used to characterize as America's worst poisoners. He is entertaining procommunist jet-set smarties and cringing before corrupt disseminators of moral and cultural toxins. Those who elected him view this spectacle with revulsion. I don't suppose they'll cast their ballots for him next time, even if his opponent is no better. Insults can be a more potent political emetic than disappointment.

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